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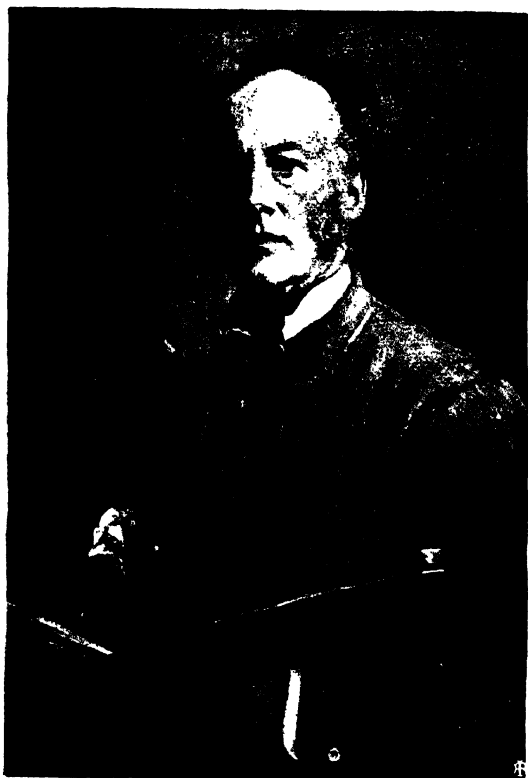


MILLAIS









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JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS

Portrait by himself in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence

# MILLAIS

BY

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"FIFTY YEARS OF MODERN PAINTING," "TURNER"

"G. F. WATTS," "BURNES-JONES," ETC.

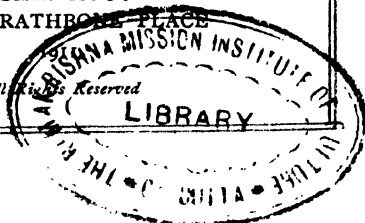
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# CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. EARLY LIFE AND STUDENT YEARS . . .	I
II. MILLAIS AND THE PRE-RAPHAELITE MOVEMENT . . . .	16
III. MILLAIS' LATER PRE-RAPHAELITE PICTURES .	56
IV. THE TIME OF CHANGE . . . .	66
V. BETWEEN TWO STYLES . . . .	82
VI. THE LATER SUBJECT-PICTURES . . .	102
VII. CHILD-PICTURES . . . .	130
VIII. PORTRAITURE . . . .	143
IX. LANDSCAPE . . . .	158
X. OF MANY THINGS, AND CONCLUSION . .	179
INDEX . . . .	193





## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS	.	.	<i>Frontispiece</i>
			FACING PAGE
LORENZO AND ISABELLA	.	.	27
CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF HIS PARENTS	.	.	30
THE WOODMAN'S DAUGHTER	.	.	41
OPHELIA	.	.	45
THE HUGUENOT	.	.	47
THE ORDER OF RELEASE	.	.	52
JOHN RUSKIN	.	.	54
AUTUMN LEAVES	.	.	60
THE BLIND GIRL	.	.	62
SIR ISUMBRAS AT THE FORD	.	.	82
THE VALE OF REST	.	.	88
EFFIE DEANS	.	.	105
THE WIDOW'S MITE	.	.	110

# **viii      LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS**

				<b>FACING PAGE</b>
<b>THE NORTH-WEST PASSAGE</b>	.	.	.	<b>111</b>
<b>THE PRINCES IN THE TOWER</b>	.	.	.	<b>131</b>
<b>THE BOYHOOD OF RALEIGH</b>	.	.	.	<b>133</b>
<b>CHERRY RIPE</b>	.	.	.	<b>138</b>
<b>A FLOOD</b>	.	.	.	<b>140</b>
<b>A SOUVENIR OF VELASQUEZ</b>	.	.	.	<b>141</b>
<b>WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE</b>	.	.	.	<b>150</b>
<b>THE DUCHESS OF WESTMINSTER</b>	.	.	.	<b>155</b>
<b>A YEOMAN OF THE GUARD</b>	.	.	.	<b>156</b>
<b>CHILL OCTOBER</b>	.	.	.	<b>166</b>

# MILLAIS

## I

### *EARLY LIFE AND STUDENT YEARS*

BRIEFLY told, the story of Millais' career as an artist is that of a child who showed a remarkably precocious talent for drawing; of a boy who when hardly more than a child was admitted as a student in the Royal Academy Schools, and became their most brilliant pupil; of a youth who took a leading part in an art movement that raised a storm of contention and has had an important influence on the course of English painting; and of a man who became the most versatile and popular English painter of his time, was elected President of the Royal Academy, and received numerous distinctions both at home and abroad. All this is clearly evidence of gifts that must have been very considerable, and also have been assiduously cultivated and put to good use.

When we come to consider his career more closely, we find no record of consistent progress along one line. He adopts as a student a manner of painting in vogue among the contemporary masters of the craft in this country and their immediate predecessors. Then, when still a student, and along with two fellow-students, he throws over this traditional practice, and tries to begin art anew on the basis of an imitation of nature as exact as he can possibly make it. He continues to paint in this extremely realistic manner until he reaches an age after which, usually, only minor changes take place in an artist's style, and then takes up again the traditional practice, which is inevitably modified, however, by the years of imitative realism. The extreme realism won for him the enthusiastic praise of John Ruskin—to whom art meant the humble service of nature—when almost every other critic furiously raged against him; his abandonment of extreme realism brought down upon him the wrath of Ruskin, when he was beginning to find more favour with the generality of critics. He went his own way whatever the critics said.

There was one kind of criticism, however, to which, about the time of his second change of style, he showed himself to be very attentive: the criticism of the people who bought pictures and reproductions of pictures. He carefully studied, and adapted himself to, the taste

of the picture-market, with the result that, whereas in his early work he aimed at a high ideal, ever seeking to give the fullest expression to his powers of invention and imagination, in his later work, though there is in it much that keeps up at or near to the old level, there is also much that sinks to the level of the merely trivially popular. His later work is good enough to make a considerable reputation; but not so good as it seems certain that it would have been, nor as to earn for him the high and enduring reputation it would have done, had he been content with less of the immediate reward for which, only too often, there has to be some sacrifice of higher things.

There was never in his popular appeal the suspicion of anything that would not come within the category of things pure and lovely and of good report. He never stooped even to the extravagantly sensational, though at times he did things that can only be called melodramatic. What can be urged against him is that he was too often content with the merely pretty and trivial, and with an appeal to superficial emotion. And one cannot but think that when in later years he returned, as he himself said, to the solemn subjects he had chosen in his youth, his interpretation of them was poorer than it would have been but for the slackening of lofty purpose in the intervening years.

In discussing his work in this manner we are taking him on his own ground. In his figure painting he was not content, like the Dutch genre painters in the great majority of their pictures, to show people engaged in the ordinary avocations of life, or doing nothing in particular—a kind of human still-life painting, in which colour, light and shade, the purely sensuous, we may say musical, qualities of painting are of chief importance. He was a subject painter; what is often called, mistakenly, as I think, a literary painter. He offers to us interpretations of history, of sacred subjects, of dramatic moments in works of poetry and prose fiction, of fairy stories and nursery rhymes, and gives, not the mere ordinary happenings of the life of his own time, but dramatic happenings, such as the rescue of children from a fire, a soldier parting with his lady before going into battle, or a wounded soldier and his family rejoicing at the conclusion of peace. Pictures of this kind are apt to look rather old-fashioned nowadays, when many people have come to believe that subject is almost the negation of art. The Hon. John Collier's sensational Academy dramas belong to an *ancien régime*. Whether or not it will have a restoration is not to our purpose to consider. But we have to recognise that Millais was a pictorial story-teller and to frame our discussion of his work accordingly. This must

inevitably include the question of the influence of the story-telling propensity upon his art *as such*.

When all has been said as to the limitations of Millais' work, his whole achievement, both as an artist, in the strict sense of the word, and as a man speaking through his art to his fellow-men, was so noteworthy and, it should be said, so generously conceived, that any depreciation of it seems ungrateful. But we have to remember that the individual is not himself alone to blame for his shortcomings. His fellow-artists, the critics, the public, must share the responsibility for whatever Millais failed to do that was in him to do. We criticise ourselves in criticising him. That other artists may have held more firmly to their convictions is not sufficient to put all the blame on to him if he weakened in his allegiance to his best self. Even with regard to himself alone, in order to do justice to his best work, it is necessary to bring it into comparison with what is not so good, and to seek to account for the falling-off. Hence, in the following pages, in addition to study of his works, things said by himself, by fellow-painters, by critics often anxious, for love of the man, to say the best they can about him and his art, are related and discussed, as showing what underlies and accounts for the greatly varying degrees of merit in his works. Out of any



criticism, except that of a devil's advocate, in which all the bad is told and the good left out, he emerges with a substantial balance of credit.

Now let us come to the man himself, beginning with his early life and first endeavours in art.

John Everett Millais was born at Southampton on the 8th of June, 1829, while his parents were on a visit there from the island of Jersey. His father belonged to a family that, according to tradition, had migrated from Normandy to the island at the time of the Conquest. The name, variously spelt, appears in the island records as far back as the fourteenth century, and is a place-name also. Millais himself said that his family, and that of the French painter, Jean François Millet, could be traced to a common ancestor. His father, an officer in the Jersey militia, is said to have been distinguished for good looks and charming manners. His mother, an Englishwoman described as of gentle birth and great natural wit and cleverness, bore the maiden-name of Evamy. Millais' father was her second husband. To her, the artist used to say, he owed everything. She encouraged him in sketching ; and gave him most of what he received in the way of general education, particularly in history, poetry, literature, and the knowledge of costume and armour. It may surely be said that all these things

were rather determining factors in his after career than merely a preparation for it. What may be regarded as another factor was an early developed passion for natural history, for the enjoyment of which the rocks and pier at St. Heliers, where the family lived after their return from Southampton, gave abundant opportunities. All the household baths and basins are said to have been stocked with specimens which he could name correctly. It is suggestive to connect this early, intimate love of nature of the future Pre-Raphaelite painter, with the early studies in geology and botany of Ruskin, the critic who was to come to the defence of Millais' detailed rendering of fact in his Pre-Raphaelite years.

In 1835, when Millais was in his seventh year, the family migrated to Dinan, in Brittany. Here there was plenty of sketching-material in the picturesque architecture of the town and the dress of the soldiery. Here happened the oft-related incident of a bet lost, and a dinner stood, by officers who would not believe that a child of Millais' age could have executed a certain vivid sketch of a tall and gorgeously attired *tambour-majeur*. The stay at Dinan only lasted about two years, and then a return was made to St. Heliers, where the young artist was placed under the tuition of a Mr. Bessel, who was accounted the best drawing-

master in the island, but had soon to admit that there was nothing more that he could teach his young pupil, who, he said, ought to have the best obtainable instruction. Friends endorsed this advice, and the boy was taken to London, to Sir Martin Archer Shee, the then President of the Royal Academy, to whom an introduction had been obtained; and whose preliminary advice that it were better to make a chimney-sweep than an artist of the boy was speedily abandoned, after some of his drawings had been seen, and one actually executed in the presidential presence, for the assertion that nature had determined his vocation for him.

The all-important 'question being 'determined,' the family settled in London as the place where the best instruction in art was obtainable. To begin with, he drew from the casts in the British Museum. Then, in the winter of 1838-9, he became a pupil in the preparatory art school of Mr. Henry Sass, which was accounted the best institution of its kind in London. Here he very soon distinguished himself by gaining the silver medal of the Society of Arts for a drawing of the Battle of Bannockburn. He was then only in his tenth year, and another often told story of the infantile genius is that when he went up to receive the medal from the Duke of Sussex, dressed in a white

plaid tunic, with black belt and buckle, short white frilled trousers, showing bare legs, with white socks and patent-leather shoes, a large white frilled collar, a bright necktie, and his hair in golden curls, the spectators could hardly believe that this was the Mr. Millais whose name had been called as the winner of the medal, and the Duke at first failed to see him over the table at which the presentations were being made.

Being a delicate child, he did not go to school, his mother still making herself responsible for his general education. Then, as afterwards, his two chief interests were art and sport. He and his brother William were eager students of the pictures in the National Gallery; while the sport consisted of fishing in the Round Pond at Kensington, for which special permission was obtained. When only eleven years old he was admitted as a student in the Royal Academy Schools, and has the distinction of being the youngest student on record.

The French officers at Dinan, who had been amazed by his sketches, had advised his parents to let him study art in Paris. At the moment the family was nearer to Paris than to London. It is curious to speculate what difference there would have been in the course of painting in England had this advice been taken. Ap-

parently, though his father belonged to what may be called debatable ground between England and France, the average parental instinct was thoroughly British. Millais in his later years could not speak French. And Paris had not then become the centre to which art students flocked from England and the United States as well as from other countries. The days of the New English Art Club had not then arrived. When they did arrive Millais wrote contemptuously, 'There is among us a band of young men who, though English, persist in painting with a broken French accent, all of them much alike, and seemingly content to lose their identity in their imitation of French masters, whom they are constitutionally, absolutely, and in the nature of things, unable to copy with justice either to themselves or to their models.' This is 'all-British' enough to satisfy the most exigent not merely of Tariff Reformers, but of Protectionists. Yet M. de la Sizeranne declares that Millais himself expressed less than any other artist the individuality of the English character, and that he approached most nearly to French ideas of art. Is there then a subconscious smuggling of ideas?

While Millais is thus going to receive, so far as such a thing can be, an all-British art training in the Royal Academy Schools, let us see what some of his con-

temporaries, men whose names are to be linked with his in the annals of our art, are doing. G. F. Watts, who had exhibited three pictures in the Royal Academy in 1837, when Millais was under the tuition of Mr. Bessel at St. Heliers, was at this time a follower of the English historical painters and Etty; but in 1843, when Millais was about half-way through his Academy apprenticeship, Watts won a first prize in the competition for mural paintings for the Houses of Parliament, and went to Italy, there to come under the influence, particularly, of the Venetian School. By the time that Millais' apprenticeship was ended, and before the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed, Watts had painted such pictures as *Life's Illusions*, *The People that sat in Darkness have seen a Great Light*, and *The Good Samaritan*, as well as numerous portraits; so that he had already made a distinctly individual and powerful contribution to English art before Holman Hunt, Millais and Rossetti had determined on revolt.

Ford Madox Brown, while yet Millais was at St. Heliers, was acquiring a sound technical knowledge of various forms of pictorial art under Baron Wappers at Antwerp; and he studied in Paris and travelled in Italy during Millais' student years. His cartoon for the Houses of Parliament competition, *The Body of Harold brought before William the Conqueror*, was de-

signed in 1843. Before the Pre-Raphaelites formulated their principles, he had determined to adopt a more natural system of light and shade for his pictures than the current studio recipes afforded.

Older than these men, for he was born in 1805, and was elected a member of the Old Water-Colour Society in 1829, the year of Millais' birth, J. F. Lewis, while Millais was in his student days, was painting in the East, in his latest manner, combining brilliant colour, breadth and minute rendering of detail. Ruskin says that Lewis anticipated the Pre-Raphaelites by twenty years. Other examples than these might be given to show that varied influences were at work that might well have sufficed to give new life to English painting, if Holman Hunt, Millais and Rossetti had never combined in open revolt against an excess of conventionality; but had quietly worked alongside those who did not revolt, but, to borrow a political phrase, effected constitutional changes.

We inevitably think, in this connexion, of Frederick Leighton, who, younger than Millais by about a year and a half, began to study art at Florence when fourteen years old, Hiram Power having said to his father, when asked advice about making the boy an artist, 'Sir, you have no choice in the matter; Nature

has done it for you'; which was much what Sir Martin Archer Shee had said about Millais a few years previously. The latter had been a student in the Academy Schools for about five years before Leighton began to study art; and he was a brilliant student. Yet Leighton preceded him as President of the Academy. This was foretold by Thackeray, who, after returning from a visit to Italy, saw Millais at the Garrick Club, and went up to him, saying, 'Millais, my boy, you must look to your laurels. I have met a wonderfully gifted young artist in Rome, about your own age, who some day will be the President of the Royal Academy before you.' Why did this 'prophecy come true? Millais exhibited at the Academy six years before Leighton; he was elected an Associate eleven years earlier, and a full Member five years earlier. Yet on the death of Sir Francis Grant, in 1878, Leighton was elected President. More than one reason can be given for this. Leighton was a man of more all-round accomplishment; and his painting all through was of a safer, more academic type than that of Millais. Leighton was no innovator. His art was little more than a backwater of the main stream of English painting. But it possessed dignity, and its shortcomings were not due to any lack of lofty æsthetic aim.



Millais' career as a student was brilliantly successful. He was only thirteen when he won a silver medal for a drawing from the antique ; he was painting at fourteen ; and three years later, in 1847, he obtained the gold medal for a historical picture, *The Tribe of Benjamin seizing the Daughters of Shiloh*. He had already, in 1846, made his first appearance in the annual Academy exhibition with an oil painting, *Pizarro seizing the Inca of Peru*.

These pictures, and another, *Cymon and Iphigenia*, painted in 1848, show clearly the influences under which Millais came as an Academy student. He was obviously on the way to join the ranks of the classical and historical painters, the 'chief representative of whom in English art at that time was William Etty, who, to the end of his life—he died in 1849 at the comparatively early age of sixty-two—made a practice of working in the life-school at the Academy as if he were an ordinary student, and was thus a very familiar personage to Holman Hunt and Millais. In the former's 'Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood' there is a sketch of Etty, seated in the school, with his legs drawn up under him, painting a study of the nude. Hunt speaks of him as 'that veteran master of colour in his generation,' and says, 'He was intoxicated with the delight of painting, and

when, after a careful reloading of his brush, he drove the tool upwards in frequent bouts before his half-closed eyes, I don't think that, had he been asked suddenly, he could have told his name.' The sketch illustrates this description. In the biography of Millais by his son we are told that Etty was the only member of the old school whom he really admired ; and Madox Brown said that Etty 'taught Millais and all our school to colour.' It was Millais' association with Holman Hunt that so changed the character of his art as to take him far away from the classical school, in both style and subject. After *Cymon and Iphigenia* there is not a single picture suggested by Greek or Roman history, legend or myth.' The story of this change is the story of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, which must now be told once more, particularly with regard to Millais' share in it and its meaning for his

## II

### *MILLAIS AND THE PRE-RAPHAELITE MOVEMENT*

HOLMAN HUNT and Millais became acquainted, through watching each other drawing, in 1844, before the former had obtained admission as a student in the Academy Schools. They were soon discussing the conventionality and pedantry in the painting of the day, and purposing to find a better way for themselves. When Holman Hunt was admitted as a student, they saw still more of each other; and in 1847, when Holman Hunt was painting his *Eve of St. Agnes*, and Millais his *Cymon and Iphigenia*, they worked together in Millais' studio, and relieved the tedium of putting in necessary detail by each doing portions of the other's picture. They talked much about art while thus working together, and early in 1848 they determined, in Holman Hunt's words, 'to adopt a style of absolute independence as to art-dogma and convention.' Dante Rossetti was at this time a pupil of Holman

Hunt's, after wearying of the drudgery of still-life painting to which Ford Madox Brown had set him.

There has been much discussion, even almost angry dispute, as to who really initiated the Pre-Raphaelite movement. It is quite clear that, of those who became closely associated, the first to determine upon a less conventional, more natural, representation in painting was Ford Madox Brown. Holman Hunt admits having been impressed by his works, but says that he thought them still too conventional and too much under the influence of tradition; while Madox Brown, in return, rallied him on his 'microscopic detail.' It is quite clear also that Holman Hunt and Millais were the first to paint in this microscopically detailed manner. Madox Brown came quite up to their standard of detail, later on. Rossetti barely attempted it. In a few years Millais abandoned it. Holman Hunt was the only one to keep to it. In a note contributed for the biography of Millais, Arthur Hughes, who sat for the head of the man in Millais' *Proscribed Royalist*, says that during the sittings they talked of the objection the critics made to the amount of detail the pre-Raphaelites gave in their pictures, and that Millais said, 'If you do not begin by doing too much you will end by doing too little; if you want to stop a ball which has been thrown along the ground you must get

a little beyond it.' Holman Hunt does not blame Millais because after a few years he abandoned the close representation of detail for the mere suggestion of it. The earlier method, he says, was not necessarily more than a discipline. It was not of the essence of Pre-Raphaelitism.

The Pre-Raphaelite movement, as a whole, was different from what any one individual who took part in it meant by it and hoped of it. Holman Hunt wished to limit the use of the term Pre-Raphaelitism to the principles and practice adopted by himself and Millais, to a naturalism, uncompromisingly literal in its detail, to begin with, and, in the case of Millais, only suggestive as to detail subsequently. This would exclude much of Madox Brown's work, practically the whole of Rossetti's, and that of Burne-Jones and other followers of Rossetti. Their work might be good of its kind, but it was not Pre-Raphaelite in Holman Hunt's sense of the word. Rossetti is regarded by him as one whose inclusion in the Brotherhood was an experiment that proved a failure. M. de la Sizeranne says of Holman Hunt that, 'having himself participated in the struggle, he perceives more clearly the details which divide him from his former comrades than the feature which unites them'; and the same writer taking a survey of the movement that

goes beyond the limits of the Brotherhood and includes the work of Watts and Madox Brown, thus summarises it : ‘ New men longing for a new art, substituting strange, novel, individual gesture, for commonplace generalisations ; and fresh, dry, pure colour, brilliant by its juxtapositions, for sunken, overlaid colour ; in one word they adopted expressive line in place of decorative line, and clear tones in place of warm tones.’ This is how the movement looks to an observer who sees it from across the Channel.

Ruskin thought the use of the term Pre-Raphaelite fanciful. Holman Hunt says that he urged its adoption in preference to Rossetti’s suggestion of ‘ Early Christian,’ a phrase used by Madox Brown. How their attention was drawn to the Italian painters who preceded Raphael is thus told by Holman Hunt : ‘ Millais had a book of engravings of the frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa which had by mere chance been lent to him. Few of us had before seen the complete set of these famous compositions. The innocent spirit which had directed the invention of the painter was traced point after point with emulation by each of us who were the workers, with the determination that a kindred simplicity should regulate our own ambition, and we insisted that the naïve traits of frank expression and unaffected grace were what had

made Italian art so essentially vigorous and progressive until the showy followers of Michael Angelo had grafted their Dead Sea fruit on the vital tree when it was bearing its choicest autumnal ripeness for the re-awakened world.' It was 'mere chance,' then, that took them to the Italian Pre-Raphaelites, now often called the Primitives. Might they not, without straying beyond the limits of the English School, have found what they needed in Hogarth, in Gainsborough, in Constable, and in the straightforward representation of contemporary events by Copley in such pictures as *The Death of Major Pierson* and *The Death of Chatham*? Holman Hunt maintains, and doubtless truly, that it was in the spirit, and not according to the letter of Pre-Raphaelite Italian painting, that they intended to work. Is it then only because he is thinking of Madox Brown and Rossetti that M. Reinach regards the Pre-Raphaelite movement as an ephemeral and artificial resurrection of the Florentine School? It must be admitted, I think, that the first Pre-Raphaelite works of Holman Hunt and Millais go a long way to justify this description.

The Brotherhood was formed towards the end of 1848. There is no need here to do more than mention the fact that in addition to Holman Hunt, Millais and Dante Rossetti, the membership included

## PRE-RAPHAELITE MOVEMENT 21

William Rossetti, F. G. Stephens, Thomas Woolner and George Collinson. The first three are the only members of lasting importance as painters. Of the others Collinson alone continued a painter, Woolner being a sculptor, while the other two became known as writers. Pictures had now to be painted for exhibition. Rossetti's picture, which had already been begun under Holman Hunt's guidance, was *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*. Holman Hunt says that the design of it 'was of Overbeck revivalist character, which no superintendence of mine as to the manner of painting it could much affect, and his *Annunciation* still reflected Brown's Early Christian phase.' His own picture this year, it had been begun in August, 1847, was *Rienzi swearing Vengeance over his Brother's Corpse*. Millais' picture was the *Lorenzo and Isabella*, now in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. The critic of the Athenæum wrote favourably of Rossetti's picture, in fact with something not far short of enthusiasm, and said that its sincerity and earnestness brought to mind the feeling with which the early Florentine monastic painters wrought. Holman Hunt's and Millais' pictures were exhibited at the Academy, and the Athenæum critic, while praising their ability and spirit, deprecated the recurrence of the artists 'to the expression of a time when art was in a state of



transition or progression rather than of accomplishment'; that is to say, to the art of Italy in and before the fifteenth century. Holman Hunt thinks that while the critic was writing of his and Millais' pictures he had Rossetti's picture in mind: that he read into their pictures what was obvious in Rossetti's. But seeing that the subjects were Italian, and the costumes in keeping with them; that there was even more painstaking rendering of detail than the Italians were wont to give; that instead of a broad colour-harmony—such as Millais was accustomed to seek in later years—local tints, brilliant and varied, harmonised as well as they could, which was also the way with Florentine art; that, as the critic pointed out, there was a lack of aerial perspective, while there was a stiffness in the figures that suggested an immature school, was there any wonder that the critic should find in these pictures the very thing, the letter and not merely the spirit of Pre-Raphaelite art, which the painters had determined to avoid?

It would have been strange, but for the romantic literary enthusiasms of the time, for these young painters, seeking closer touch with life and nature, to choose subjects from history and literature. Holman Hunt explains the choice of his subject by saying that, like most young men, he was stirred by the spirit

of freedom of the passing revolutionary time and that the appeal to Heaven against the tyranny exercised over the poor and helpless seemed well fitted for pictorial treatment. One wonders how many people who saw the picture drew this lesson from it. Watts, moved in the same way, and about the same time, painted pictures of the kind of distress then prevalent, *Found Drowned*, *The Seamstress*, *Under a Dry Archway*, *Irish Peasants during the Famine*, whose meaning could not be mistaken. Was Millais' illustration to Keats's poem intended as a condemnation of class distinctions? Rossetti's subject was, of course, of markedly conventional type. How much more truly was Hogarth's art in touch with life than were the first works of the Pre-Raphaelite painters!

Were they in touch with nature? M. Reinach calls the Pre-Raphaelite movement dry and artificial. It has to be admitted that these pictures do not look natural; and just because life and nature are not expressed by the accumulation of details. We do not get even the best still-life studies in that way. We can look back now on the artistic revolution of 1848 with knowledge and experience not possessed by those who attacked or defended it at the time. We have had the Impressionist movement, the aim of which was to express life and nature under the condi-

tions of vibrant light and atmosphere. We in England are—even while these lines are being penned—in the throes of the discovery of another movement, calling itself, or called, Post-Impressionist, the aim of which is to express what to the painter seems most significant in people and things. In both these movements we have emphasis on the one side and sacrifice on the other. The Impressionist sacrifices not merely the detail, but the significance of the object, in order to get light and atmosphere; the Post-Impressionist sacrifices light, atmosphere and detail to emphasise what to him are the significant features of the object. The Pre-Raphaelites gave minuté detail at the expense of vibrant light and atmosphere, and of selection of the significant. Ruskin, in the famous piece of advice to young artists in 'Modern Painters,' that was so much to the liking of Holman Hunt, told them to go to nature in all singleness of heart, selecting nothing and rejecting nothing. In 1859 John Brett exhibited a picture of the Val d'Aosta, in which he had followed Ruskin's advice too closely even for Ruskin's liking; he had put down, as faithfully as he could, just what he saw before him, and the critic, though he bought the picture, complained that he could not find from it that the painter loved, or feared, anything in all that wonderful piece of the world; 'I never saw the

mirror so held up to Nature ; but it is Mirror's work, not Man's.' Millais' comment on Ruskin's criticism of this picture was 'that he had been lauding sky-high, just where it was in the miniature room, a wretched work like a photograph of some place in Switzerland, evidently painted under his guidance.'

But it is all a question of degree, and it is by no means a far cry from the detail of Brett's picture to that of the early Pre-Raphaelite works, which closely approximate to the products of colour-photography. I was shown recently some excellent photographic colour-transparencies, and found them very perplexing. In detail, in colour, and in light they were nature itself ; at least it was not any defect in these respects that perplexed me. But the total effect was unlike nature itself. The perplexity arose from the unselected detail, given with the minute exactness that we only see in nature when we examine the scene before us bit by bit, with utmost intentness to let nothing escape us that can be seen. And this was the way in which Holman Hunt and Millais looked at nature. Not only Brett, but even Millais himself could carry this minute examination of nature too far for Ruskin's liking, as in *The Blind Girl*, 'where he did not see truly what he thought he saw,' painting 'the spark of light in a crow's eye a hundred yards

off, as if he were only painting a miniature of a crow close by.' If the painter wishes to be true to nature in the sense of giving us the feeling of actuality, in the sense of making us feel that, were we face to face with what is represented in the picture that is how it would look, there must be sacrifice of not a little of the possibly visible detail in the scene.

But this is not necessarily the artist's aim. There is no such aim, for example, in some of the very finest art of China and Japan. Then we have to ask such questions as : is the detail fused into a decorative whole? or, is it relevant to the subject of the picture? The very detail itself may be the subject. The painter's aim may be to interest us in the exquisite beauty of curve and contour, of colour and texture, of natural objects. It is not possible to lay down a law and say that such and such things can never be appropriate to a work of art. On the other hand, it cannot be maintained that any one thing is always so appropriate. And here was a defect in the principle adopted by Holman Hunt and Millais—Rossetti can hardly be said to have adopted it—the detail was to be given in season and out of season. Millais eventually admitted the defect when he said that you must begin by doing too much or you will end by doing too little.





IORENO AN' ISABELLA

With so much in them to perplex the public—which is always conservative and dependent on authority—with limitations and defects that critic and artist alike could not fail to see, the reception of the first Pre-Raphaelite pictures was really remarkably good. Full credit was given for, in one critic's actual words, their ability and spirit. Millais' *Lorenzo and Isabella* was certainly an extraordinary achievement for a youth not yet out of his teens. The objections raised to it were precisely as to the particulars in which Millais eventually altered his practice. The critics assumed that the youth would do this more speedily than he did; and so praised rather than blamed, on the whole. The Athenæum critic recognised the 'excellent action, painting and character in the several heads . . . and in certain occasional passages of incident and of form.' He missed, however, what is more than half the dramatic significance of the picture, seeing no rationality in the action of the eldest of Isabella's brothers, who, enraged at Lorenzo's obvious attentions to her, and at her acquiescence in them, is tormenting her hound, and expending on the cracking of a nut the vicious energy he cannot immediately expend in the like treatment of Lorenzo's skull. The other two brothers see what he is doing, and smile more or less grimly. The serving-man sees it also; and one wonders



whether he is actually, or only discreetly, uncomprehending ; the other members of the company are oblivious of what is going on. A hawk, perched on a chair-back, and tearing a feather, symbolises the cruelty of the brothers. We do not need to be told the course and end of the story. We know that Lorenzo and Isabella are victims, marked, the one for death and the other for long agony of unavailing grief. All this the critic missed, saying that the action of the brother not merely divided attention with, but appropriated all attention from, the lovesick Lorenzo and Isabella. The dramatic treatment of the subject still impresses us ; we may be inclined to speak of the quaintness rather than of the mannerism of the picture, and to feel that a flavour of the quattrocento is in keeping with the subject. The colour is quietly harmonious ; the rendering of textures is masterly ; we are not disturbed in these days by a natural treatment of the light and shade. It is easier for us to enjoy the picture than it was for those who saw it when it was first exhibited. It must be mentioned that all the figures are portraits ; for example, that the man drinking from a glass is Dante Rossetti, and that Lorenzo is his brother, Mr. William Rossetti. .

On the stool upon which Isabella is seated are carved, under some figures in relief, the letters, P.R.B.

Their meaning had not been made known, so the critics, lay and professional, did not understand that what they regarded as defects in these pictures, due to the youthfulness of the painters, were things most deliberately intended, were, indeed, a protest against the current theories and practice of art. But all this became known before the next annual exhibitions were held; and the Pre-Raphaelite pictures of 1850 were inevitably criticised otherwise than had been those of 1849. Doubtless the adverse criticism was too strong; but, then, so was the challenge, as Millais afterwards admitted. The members of the Brotherhood intended to be provocative; and it is of the nature of the provocative to provoke. Even if we had to admit that the movement was entirely praiseworthy, which it was not, bitter opposition was to be expected.

There is a lot of human nature in the proverb of the new wine and the old wine-skins. Those who have listened to both popular and expert criticism in Impressionist and Post-Impressionist exhibitions will have no difficulty in recognising that the outburst of 1848 was inevitable. I have known a picture-dealer to leave a Post-Impressionist exhibition declaring that it made him ill, and have seen a painter of considerable ability turn his back on one of Mr. Augustus John's pictures

declaring that the colours absolutely hurt his eyes. I have heard the equivalent of the demand that the Pre-Raphaelite pictures should be removed from the walls of the Academy.

Holman Hunt exhibited his picture of Christian missionaries attacked by the people at the instigation of the Druids, now in the Oxford University Galleries, in which, with all its fine qualities admitted, there are things of which, if the word curious be used, it will hardly be thought to be misapplied. Rossetti showed the *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, now in the National Gallery of British Art, which, in Holman Hunt's opinion, as we have already seen, 'still reflected Brown's early Christian phase.' Perhaps, considering the subject, this was not necessarily a demerit. However this may be, the critics fell foul of it, as of the other Pre-Raphaelite pictures, and Rossetti withdrew from the contest.

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Millais appears to have been the one most savagely attacked. Technically he was the ablest of the group, and so his lapse from orthodoxy may have seemed to carry the most danger with it. He exhibited *Christ in the House of his Parents*, and *Ferdinand and Ariel*. The heaviest fire of the orthodox artillery was directed on the former picture; and even now this can occasion little surprise, for much can be said in justification of

CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF HIS FAITHFULS





it. The picture appeared without title save a quotation from the book of Zechariah : ' And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.' This clearly announces the picture to be intended as an example of sacred art, of art setting forth the Christian faith, which at one time had been nearly all that had been demanded of art. Yet, in the picture itself, only some obvious symbolism suggests that it is intended for anything but domestic genre ; and the symbolism does not suffice to maintain it at a higher level. We need not dwell on the fact that the verse quoted as a title to the picture has no application to Christ. Probably the critics thought, just as did Millais, that it had such application. But it was absurd to bring the verse into connexion with the child Christ's accidentally hurting his hand with a nail, which is the central incident of the picture. We should have expected at least to see represented some deliberate injury done to Christ, or ignorant misunderstanding of him, by those from whom he might have expected the fullest sympathy. It has been said, and quite truly, that Millais, in this picture, avoided any namby-pamby prettiness and elegant affectation. But what avails this avoidance in the detail, if the main incident be namby-pamby? All is

consternation because the child has scratched the palm of his hand with a nail. His mother flings herself down on her knees and kisses him, her face drawn as if with intensest grief. St. Joseph, holding the boy's injured hand, looks grave, as also does St. Anne. John the Baptist brings a basin of water to wash the wound; and he also looks anxious. The child Christ has a fragile, petted look. Symbolism and costume apart, *The Spoiled Child*, as I have said elsewhere, is the title this picture would suggest. If we are to defend such a treatment of the subject, we can only say that a fuss over a trivial hurt that would be most unwholesome in an ordinary family must be quite permissible in a Holy Family. \*Perhaps we can actually prove nothing either way. But the realism of the picture suggests a historical point of view in the modern sense; and upon such terms the incident is both incredible and unworthy.

Contemporary criticism was far more severe than this. It went to entirely unjustifiable lengths. Even Charles Dickens, in his wrath, described the picture in language that was mere caricature of it. Writing in 'Household Words' he said: 'In the foreground of that carpenter's shop is a hideous, wry-necked, blubbering, red-haired boy in a night-gown, who appears to have received a poke in the hand from the

water mark of some particular kind of art-expression beyond a point reached hitherto. If he has any claim of this kind it lies in his application to the landscape in his early pictures of the modern scientific, keenly observant, yet emotional attitude towards the infinite wealth of individual life and beauty in nature.





# INDEX

The titles of pictures are printed in italics. In several instances they are abbreviated. The date in brackets after each title is the year the picture was painted. Black-and-white drawings are not indexed. They are referred to on pages 125 to 129.

## A

- Apple Blossoms* (1859), 90  
 Armstrong, Sir Walter, 80,  
 156, 187  
*Astley, Sir John* (1881), 149  
*Autumn Leaves* (1856), 58,  
 60-1, 73, 76-7, 99, 164,  
 170

## B

- Baldry, A. L., 122  
 Baynes, Thomas Spencer, 57  
*Beaconsfield, Earl of* (1881),  
 152  
 Berenson, Bernhard, 171  
*Bischoffsheim, Mrs.* (1873),  
 154  
 Black-and-white drawings,  
 125-129.

- Blind Girl, The* (1856), 25, 55,  
 62-5, 73  
*Blow, Blow, Thou Winter  
 Wind* (1892), 176  
 Bone, Muirhead, 162  
*Boyhood of Raleigh, The*  
 (1870), 133  
 Brett, John, 24  
*Bride of Lammermoor, The*  
 (1877), 104, 106  
*Bright, John* (1880), 152  
 Brown, Ford Madox, 11-12,  
 15, 64, 87  
 Browning, Robert, 46  
*Bubbles* (1886), 134  
 Burne-Jones, Sir Edward, 71,  
 136

## C

- Caller Herrin* (1881), 137

- Captive, The* (1882), 140  
*Carlyle, Thomas* (1882), 150  
 Carpenter, Edward, 163  
*Cherry Ripe* (1879), 138  
 Chesneau, M., 34  
*Bill October* (1870), 166-8  
*Christ in the House of His Parents* (1850), 30 et seq.  
*Cinderella* (1881), 136  
 Clausen, George, 157  
 Collier, The Hon. John, 4, 112  
 Collins, Charles Allston, 44  
 Collinson, George, 21  
 Combe, Mr., 75, 78  
 Constable, John, 20  
 Copley, J. S., 20  
*Cymon and Iphigenia* (1849-51), 14-16

## D

- Deserted Garden, The* (1875), 172  
*Diana Vernon* (1880), 104  
 Dickens, Charles, 32  
*Disciple, A* (1895), 121  
*Dropped from the Nest* (1882), 140  
 Dyce, William, 34

## E

- Effie Deans* (1877), 104-5  
 Ellison, Mr. Richard, 35  
*Enemy Sowing Tares, The* (1865), 100, 118  
*Empty Cage, The* (1895), 140  
*Escape of a Heretic, The* (1857), 86  
 Etty, William, 11, 14, 15  
*Eve of St Agnes, The* (1863), 94 et seq.

## F

- Ferdinand and Ariel* (1850), 30, 35-8  
*Flood, A* (1870), 140  
*Flowing to the River* (1871), 168  
*Flowing to the Sea* (1872), 168  
*Forerunner, A* (1896), 121  
 Frankum, Mr., 35  
*Fraser, Dr., Bishop of Manchester* (1880), 153  
*Fringe of the Moor, The* (1874), 171  
 Frith, W. P., 188

## G

- Gambler's Wife, The* (1869), 110

Gainsborough, Thomas, 131,  
157  
Gladstone, W. E. (1879, 1885,  
1890), 150  
Glen Birnam (1891), 175  
Good Resolve, A (1877), 80  
Gray, Thomas, 60  
Greenwich Pensioners (1868),  
110

H

Halcyon Weather (1892), 174  
Hamerton, Philip G., 159  
Hare, Sir John (1893), 146  
Hearts are Trumps (1872), 155  
Hogarth, William, 20, 23,  
157  
Hook, J. C. (1882), 150  
Hughes, Arthur, 17  
Huguenot, The (1852), 44, 47  
et seq.  
Hunt, William Holman,  
chapter II., *passim*, 56, 66  
et seq., 117, 164, 179

I

Idyll, 1745, An (1884), 135  
Impressionism, 24, 29  
Iving, Sir Henry (1884), 146

J

Jephthah (1867), 119  
Jopling, Mrs. (1879), 156

K

Keats, John, 94  
Knight Errant, The (1870),  
108

L

La Thangue, H. H., 157  
Lang, Andrew, 60  
Leighton, Lord, 12, 13  
Lewis, J. F., 12  
Little Miss Muffett (1884),  
140  
Little Mrs. Gamp (1881),  
140  
Little Speedwell's Darling Blue, -  
The (1892), 140  
Love of James I of Scotland,  
The (1859), 90  
Lorenzo and Isabella (1849),  
21, 27-8

M

Mariana (1851), 38, 40.  
Martyr of the Salween. The  
(1871), 109

- Meier-Graeffe, Herr, 146  
*Mercy. St. Bartholomew's Day* (1886), 110  
 Millais, J. E., birth, 6; early life, 7-10; Academy student, 14-15; the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, chapter II.; elected A.R.A., 56, seeks popular success, 66 *et seq.*, his baronetcy, 179; home life, 180; personal appearance, 180; boyishness, 181; love of the Royal Academy, 182; opinions on art, 183 *et seq.*, foreign travel, 188; craftsmanship, 189; no mural paintings by, 189  
 Millais, J. E., *The Biography of*, 36, 40, 59, 79, 84, 121, 123, 132, 166, 167, 180, 189  
 Millais, Lady, 180  
 Millais, William, 9, 41, 44, 54, 56  
*Misnet, The* (1866), 100  
*Mistletoe Gatherer, The* (1884), 175  
 Moxon's "Pennyson," 125  
*Murthly Moss* (1887), 171  
*Murthly Water* (1888), 171  
*My First Sermon* (1863), 98-9  
*My Second Sermon* (1863), 98
- N
- New English Art Club, 10, 185  
*New Laid Eggs* (1873), 128  
*Newman, Cardinal* (1881), 153  
*No. 1* (1875), 111  
*North-West Passage, The* (1874), 111 *et seq.*
- O
- Old Garden, The* (1888), 174  
*Olivia* (1882), 104  
*Ophelia* (1852), 44 *et seq.*  
*Order of Release, The* (1853), 52-4, 72  
*Over the Hills and Far Away* (1875), 171
- P
- Peace Concluded* (1856), 58-9, 68, 73  
*Perugini, Mrs.* (1880), 156  
*Pizarro seizing the Inca of Peru* (1846), 14  
*Portia* (1886), 103  
 Post-Impressionism, 212, 213, 214

Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood,  
16 *et seq.*  
*Princes in the Tower, The*  
(1878), 131  
Prinsep, Val, 96  
*Princess Elizabeth* (1879), 142  
*Proscribed Royalist, The* (1853),  
17, 51, 72

## Q

*Quain, Sir Richard* (1896), 149

## R

Raeburn, William, 131  
Reade, Charles, 85  
Redgrave, R. and S., 46, 162  
Reinach, M., 20, 23  
*Rescue, The* (1855), 57, 131  
*Return of the Dove to the Ark*  
(1851), 38, 43  
Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 99, 140  
*Romans leaving Britain, The*  
(1865), 110  
*Rosalind and Celia* (1868), 100,  
103  
Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 16  
*et seq.*, 28, 38, 56, 59, 64  
Rossetti, William, 21, 28  
*Ruling Passion, The* (1885),  
114, 115

Ruskin, John, 2, 7, 12, 24, 25,  
34, 39, 54-5, 57, 59, 60, 62  
*et seq.*, 66, 75-6, 82 *et seq.*,  
87, 88-9, 90-2, 137, 159,  
163, 165, 172

## S

*Salisbury, The Marquis of*,  
(1883), 151  
Sarto, Andrea del, 107  
Shaw, Byam, 40  
Siddal, Miss (Mrs. Dante  
Rossetti), 45  
*Sir Isumbras at the Ford* (1857),  
82 *et seq.*, 99  
Sizeranne, M. de la, 10, 18,  
43, 48, 50, 107, 184  
Sidgwick, Henry, 95, 98  
*Sleeping* (1867), 100  
*Souvenir of Velasquez, A*  
(1868), 141  
Spielmann, M. H., 40, 42, 55,  
68, 69, 70, 79, 80, 85, 87,  
89, 123, 131, 153, 166,  
171  
*Stella* (1868), 106  
*Stephen, Saint* (1895), 121  
Stephens, F. G., 21, 37, 48  
Stibbard, Mrs. (1878), 156  
*Sweetest Eyes Were Ever Seen*  
(1881), 137

## T

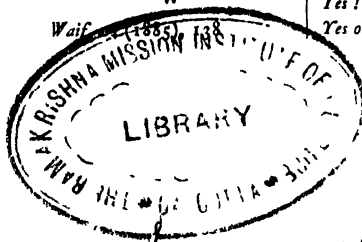
- Tennyson, Alfred, Lord, 60, 89  
 Thompson, Sir Henry (1881),  
 149  
*Time the Reaper* (1895), 124  
*Tribe of Benjamin seising the  
 Daughters of Shiloh* (1847),  
 14  
 Turner, William, of Oxford,  
 161

## V

- Vale of Rest, The* (1858), 88 *et  
 seq.*  
 Van Eyck, Jan, 78  
*Vanessa* (1868), 106  
*Victory, O Lord!* (1871), 117

## W

*Waif* (1885), 138



- Waking* (1867), 100  
 Watts, G. F., 11, 23, 48,  
 144 *et seq.*  
 Watts-Dunton, Mr., 149  
*Westminster, The Duchess of*  
 (1881), 155  
 Whitman, Walt, 162  
*Widow's Mite, A* (1870),  
 110  
*Winter Fuel* (1873), 168-70  
*Wolf's Den, The* (1863), 98  
*Woodman's Daughter, The*  
 (1851), 38, 41, 99  
 Woolner, Thomas, 21

## Y

- Yeoman of the Guard, A*  
 (1876), 156  
*Yes!* (1877), 111  
*Yes or No?* (1871), 111

Recd. on... 8/4/75

R. S. No. 5123

G. R. No. 20390

stick of another boy with whom he has been playing in an adjacent gutter, and to be holding it up for contemplation of a kneeling woman, so horrible in her ugliness that (supposing it were possible for any human creature to exist for a moment with that dislocated throat) she would stand out from the rest of the company as a monster in the vilest cabaret in France, or the lowest gin-shop in England.' This is magnificent—of its kind—but it is not true. If Millais had brought an action for libel against Dickens he ought to have succeeded, and to have obtained heavy damages, sufficient to recoup him for failure to sell not a few pictures. Dickens admired some of Millais' later works, and he and the artist became close friends; but in 1855 he said that his opinion about this picture was not in the least changed. He wrote of it as an unworthy use of the artist's great powers. This much more fitly describes his own criticism of the picture. Millais had done his best; but sacred art was not, either then or later, his *métier*.

The 'Times' critic called the picture revolting, and professed to see in it misery, dirt and even disease, all finished with the same loathsome minuteness. Disease is good! The pigment failed in at least one of Millais' pictures, and gave to one or two of the figures an appearance of skin-disease; but I am



not aware that even yet there is anything of the kind in this picture. Surely the art of the Pre-Raphaelites was not so microscopic as to detect microbes! To another critic the picture was a collection of splay feet, puffed joints and misshapen limbs. To another it was pictorial blasphemy. This was blind rage, not criticism; and its very excess must have stiffened the backs of those it was meant to crush. One is more impressed by Ruskin's statement, made in a letter to M. Chesneau in 1882, that he had at first passed the picture disdainfully, and that Dyce literally dragged him up to it and forced him to look for its merits; and that he was offended by the Virgin's contorted face. If this were the case with Ruskin, so soon to be the champion of the Pre-Raphaelites, little wonder that the picture was generally condemned.

Though the picture is realistic—the carpentry was painted in a carpenter's shop, the carpenter was studied from an actual carpenter to get the right muscular development, though his head is that of Millais' father, and so throughout the picture—the design is almost severely symmetrical, the mother and child in the centre, to the left St. Anne and a youth, to the right St. Joseph and John the Baptist; two similar openings in the background, timber-stack balancing timber-stack. The various

patches of brilliant colour do not fuse, if they do not fight.

The abuse of it notwithstanding, the picture was sold for £150, to a dealer who had courage enough to paste all the adverse criticisms on the back of it. With regard to the sale of *Ferdinand lured by Ariel*, Millais had varying, and in the end quite good, fortune. It was a £100 commission from a dealer who went off his bond when the storm of criticism broke over Millais' head. This was a heavy blow, for the money was needed to pay household bills. His parents had to decide that they must take in lodgers. While Millais was in almost tearful despondence, a friend, Mr. Frankum, brought in a well-known connoisseur, Mr. Richard Ellison, to see his work. Mr. Frankum could tell that something was wrong, enquired, and heard the story of the revoked commission. After Mr. Ellison had seen what Millais had to show, and was about to leave, he told the painter that he had written a little pamphlet on water-colour art, and asked permission to give him a copy of it and to write his name in it. Millais assented, with no real interest in the matter, however, and Mr. Ellison sat down and spent a little time, more than seemed needful for the avowed purpose, writing in the pamphlet, into which, as he shook hands with Millais,

he urged him to look, as he felt sure he would find in it something that he would like. When the visitors were gone, Millais sat down, like the Bruce, and in no more cheerful mood, to think. Glancing round, he caught sight of the pamphlet, and picked it up, more out of complacency than curiosity, when two pieces of paper fell out of it. Rescuing these from the floor, he found that one was a note from Mr. Ellison saying that he wished to become the purchaser of *Ferdinand* for £150, while the other was a cheque for that amount. The story of the defaulting dealer had been overheard. Millais rushed into the room where his parents were, shouting and waving the cheque, so that they thought he was demented. A new thing in the room caught his eye at once, a piece of paper fastened against the window with wafers, bearing the announcement that lodgings were to be had in that house. He rushed to the window, tore down the paper, and there were soon mutual rejoicings. This story is told, with less and somewhat different detail, in the biography of Millais. The above version was given to me by a fellow-artist of Millais', who had it, as the gossips say, from Millais himself. And he added the piquant, if slightly unpleasant, detail of Millais' saying that, whenever he thought of the incident, he fancied he could feel on his finger-ends the nasty stickiness of

the wafers with which the paper had been affixed to the window-pane! Clearly these rebels of art had to suffer for their principles. Yet Millais received £300 for his two pictures of the year; he was able to earn other, if small sums; and he was only twenty-one at this time. We might easily expend too much sympathy upon him.

*Ferdinand* is a marvel of painstaking record of detail in herbage, flower and foliage. This, and its vividly brilliant, if even we do not say harsh colour, would alone suffice to give shocks to those who had been nurtured on generalisation. Yet here we may think that the detail is relevant to the subject, as it would be in a picture illustrating 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.' We are in an enchanted isle; we may expect an unusual vividness of perception. Spirits become audible, sight may well be intensified. This line of argument could not be used, of course, at the time. The Pre-Raphaelite rule was to give detail whatever the subject might be. So the outraged generalisers flung themselves like wild beasts upon their prey.

The landscape was painted from nature in the summer and autumn of 1849. F. G. Stephens sat for the head of Ferdinand, which, after a careful drawing in pencil, was painted in one long sitting, trying to both painter and sitter, of five hours. Stephens thought

that his head was not Ferdinand-like ; and we may agree. If we had been on the island, and this had been Ferdinand, we should have applauded Prospero's comments on Miranda's outburst of admiration when first she saw her future husband. Ariel and his satellites are a weirdly imagined company, worthy to rank with Blake's ghost of a flea. He is a most uncanny imp ; and they might be enlarged photographs of the spirits of mosquitoes. Looking at their inhuman human heads and bat-like wings and claws, we might fear that Ferdinand was going to be tormented rather than only teased, did we not know them to be subject to Prospero's magic power. Altogether the picture is one of those that not merely illustrate a narrative, but add something to our understanding of it. We know, after seeing it, more about the enchanted island, and the spirits that inhabit it, than Shakespeare has told us.

Rossetti, it has been already said, now retired from the contest. He exhibited no more. But the next year, 1851, Holman Hunt and Millais faced the music again, the former with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and the latter with *Mariana*, *The Woodman's Daughter* and *The Return of the Dove to the Ark*. Already Millais shows himself to be much the more rapid worker of the two. The storm of indignation

against the persistent young innovators, holding on their way despite all that their seniors had said to them, waxed fiercer than ever. But now Ruskin came to their aid. He could hardly do otherwise. They had been acting exactly in accordance with the advice he had given to young artists in 'Modern Painters.' In two letters to the 'Times' he took the opponents of the Pre-Raphaelites on their own ground. Their paintings had been pronounced untrue. He demonstrated their truth. At least he demonstrated that they gave a more correct record of facts than other contemporary pictures gave. One makes this reservation because, in these days, we must not forget that there are truth of impression, truth of significance, and doubtless other truths, as well as truth of record. But, given even average craftsmanship, there was bound to be more faithful record of facts in the work of men who gave weeks and months to setting down on the spot the landscape background of a single subject-picture than in the work of those who gave perhaps not a tithe of the time to the same thing. We need not follow Ruskin in his demonstration of that which to us, now, is obvious; but which is not the kind of truth that we wish to see insisted upon in every work of art—perhaps not in very many works of art. But then, as now, truth in

the form of faithful record was regarded by most people as the chief if not the only criterion of merit ; and when so great an authority as Ruskin declared the Pre-Raphaelites to be possessed of this virtue, censure gradually relaxed and then turned to praise.

Of Millais' pictures of this year *Mariana* and *The Woodman's Daughter* are, on the whole, the most satisfactory. *Mariana* is an astonishing piece of craftsmanship. Ruskin said that since the days of Albert Dürer no studies of draperies and details, nothing so earnest and complete, had been achieved in art. In the biography of Millais, Mr. Spielmann is rebuked for saying, in his book on Millais, that 'the colour is surely too strong and gay to be quite in harmony' with the subject'; and the rebuke is justifiable. The whole point of the picture is that the lady's surroundings are extremely beautiful, and yet she is unutterably sad. Mr. Byam Shaw has painted a picture of a lady walking by a stream on a brilliant summer's day ; but she is in mourning, bereaved by the Boer War. Paradoxically we may say that the harmony in each picture depends upon a discord. Millais' picture is not a mere illustration of Tennyson's poem, in which the moated grange is a mouldering house set in a dreary landscape. It opens up to us one of the tragedies of life, that no luxury, no beauty, can fill the place of







### THE WOODMAN'S DAUGHTER

From the picture in the 10 session of Lady Millais

unrequited or ill-requited love. The lady has been working at her embroidery. She rises, and bends backward to relieve the strain of long-stooping. But there is a deeper thing than physical weariness written on the face. The grief that saps the heart, that has long been sapping the heart, is written there. The end is drawing near. The armorial bearings in the lancet window facing us show a snowdrop and the motto '*In cælo quies.*'

*The Woodman's Daughter* shows one of Millais' most painstakingly literal renderings of landscape. Doubtless there has been some arrangement and selection. But, in the main, the beauty is the beauty of nature, not of art. • William Millais writes enthusiastically of it as the most beautiful background ever painted by his brother. 'Notice,' he says, 'the exquisitely tender greys in the bark of the young oak in the foreground, against which the brilliantly clothed lordling is leaning. Every touch in the fretwork tracery all about it has been caressed by a true lover of his art, for in these his glorious early days one can see that not an iota was slurred over, but that every beauty in nature met with its due appreciation at his hands.' To say that Millais in later years 'slurred over' detail is to use a question-begging epithet. We shall have to return to the point. Meanwhile we may

content ourselves with agreeing that a true lover of the art of painting may well, on occasion, devote his art to such faithful records of nature, not of its beauty only, but of its myriad-teeming *life*. And here the detail is relevant to the subject. Coventry Patmore's poem, 'The Tale of Poor Maud,' tells of the squire's son, going where the woodman was thinning the groves of the ancient manor park, and watching him and his little daughter, who used to be with him; and of the boy's offering her fruits, in a sullen tone—because of his boyish shyness surely, and then the story goes on to familiarity and so to a tragic close. Mr. Spielmann says that the picture 'gives no hint of the climax of the poem, that points the moral of the incompatibility of class and class.' But a few lines later he says: 'For symbolism we have the bird's feathers at the boy's foot to compare with the hawk tearing a feather in *Isabella*, and the cat with the bird in Mr. Holman Hunt's *Awakening Conscience*.' Here, surely, is the plainest of hints. And the ending, even without the hint, is implicit in the beginning of the story. The shy, yet pleased, surprise of the girl, the look that anticipates, at least, the dawn of love, the pride of the boy, shown in expression, in nonchalant attitude, in the gesture of the arm with which he proffers the fruit, so curiously compounded of awkward-

ness and imperiousness—we do not need to be told the remainder of the story.

In *The Return of the Dove to the Ark*, two girls are fondling a dove. One of them looks in robust health; the other might be worn by disease. They are standing amid straw-litter, as if they were in a farm-building. They are not beautiful; but we are under no necessity of thinking that Noah's daughters were so. Ruskin could say, quite rightly, that the folds of their simple garments were true; but they are not beautiful, and only express in the most general way the pose of the figures. M. de la Sizeranne comments on the influence of the Elgin Marbles on English art in the complex folds of drapery that so many of our painters affect. There is no such complexity here, but the most matter-of-fact simplicity. The picture gives no hint of the waste of water surrounding the ark. We may chance to notice that one of the girls holds in her hand a twig—the olive-branch, presumably, that the dove has brought back. Essentially the picture represents two very ordinary girls, curiously clothed, caressing a dove. Affection for a beautiful, dumb creature is expressed in it. The subject—rather the emotion—is worth such expression—and more.

In July, 1851, Holman Hunt and Millais went

down to Ewell, near Kingston, and found there landscape that would serve, the former for his pictures *The Hireling Shepherd* and *The Light of the World*, the latter for his *Ophelia*. At the same time Millais painted the wall, and the flowers and foliage, that form the background in *The Huguenot*. Charles Collins, the brother of Wilkie Collins, who tried painting but abandoned it for literature, and William Millais, were there also. They painted all day, and, in the evening, 'assembled to talk deeply on art, drink strong tea, and discuss and criticise each other's pictures.' They are described as a jolly, bachelor party. Holman Hunt used 'to be fond of telling stories of Collins's nervousness when he had to go alone along the unlighted country-lanes at night. The streamlet in Holman Hunt's *Hireling Shepherd*, grown wider and deeper in Millais' *Ophelia*, is the Ewell. They remained in the country, painting the landscape parts of their pictures, until late in the autumn. Even those who disapproved of their methods could not but have admitted that they spared no pains in carrying them out. In a letter to a friend, Millais gave a humorous account of his troubles; how that the flies of Surrey were very muscular, with a great propensity for probing human flesh; that, to begin with, their rooms were four miles from where Holman Hunt was





OPHEIA

painting, and two miles from his own spot; that he sat tailor-fashion for eleven hours; that there were threats of prosecution for trespass and damage to hay, and of a bull being put in the field when the hay was cut; that he was in danger of being blown into the stream and so acquiring strong sympathy with Ophelia. It was early in December when they 'struck camp' and returned to London, there to finish their pictures.

The model for Ophelia was Miss Siddal, who afterwards became the wife of Dante Rossetti. An untoward incident happened during the completion of the picture. She lay in a bath in order that Millais might get correctly the garments floating in the water. The bath was kept heated with lamps placed underneath it; but on one occasion Millais allowed them to go out. The lady took cold; an irate father threatened legal proceedings; but the incident closed by Millais' paying the doctor's bill.

After what has just been said of the long months of work at Ewell, there would be no need to see the picture to know that it would contain a marvellously detailed study of nature. The willow-trunk under which Ophelia is passing as she floats down the stream, branches, reeds, foliage, flowers, birds, are painted with minute individual accuracy. It is said that when this picture was on exhibition once at the



Guildhall, a professor of botany, who was prevented from taking his students into the country, made use of it as the subject of a lecture. The story is more than credible. The picture compels us to believe it. We are inclined to ask if such exact representation is worth the doing. It may be so as an exercise. Again, the artist may have been happy in his work ; it may have been a delight to him so closely to observe and lovingly depict living and beautiful things. Then, with regard to its use to other people, we must not forget the truth of Browning's

we're made so that we love  
First when we see them painted, things we have passed  
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see ;  
And so they are better, painted—better to us,  
Which is the same thing.

We cannot dismiss such work as does Redgrave, an exponent of the generalising school, calling it laborious idleness. Even if we feel, as one does feel before this picture, that such detail almost demands life and movement, that we are cheated by so much being given as to promise, and yet finally not to give, everything ; yet this or any other objection cannot make us wish that Millais had not spent those long and toilsome days by the side of an English stream. Surely the sight of this picture must often woo the





THE HUGUENOT

town-dweller away to the country. For this is not idealisation; it is record. Whatever the artist may have done by way of arrangement and selection, cannot make up for the loss of actual light and movement, and of the sound of the stream, and of the rustle of leaves, and of bird's note and hum of insect. Perhaps there is some harshness in the colour—a little, not much—it is hard for art to compete with nature on her own ground, to rival nature, rather than by admitting inferiority in one way to make good the claim to a distinct though related province of her own. We should gain much and lose little, as to the landscape, could we leave this picture for the actual stream-side. But this is not true of all landscape art.

Turning to the picture as a whole, the detail is surely relevant to the subject. Thinking of Ophelia's love of flowers, of her pathetic gifts of them to her friends, how could a painter generalise those she still holds, or the others that have slipped from her grasp, and, like her, are drowning in the stream? And so we need also the same loving detail throughout the picture. We think of each leaf and flower sorrowing for the sad, untimely fate of her who has loved them well.

*The Huguenot* was an immediate popular success. Crowds stood before it all day long at the Academy,

says F. G. Stephens ; who also says that though the picture did not silence all challengers, Millais had at last conquered his public and must henceforth educate them. Millais himself said in a letter to a friend that the immense success he had met with had given him a new sensation of pleasure in painting. The story of the painting of the picture is somewhat amusing. The background of wall, foliage and flowers was painted before he had definitely decided upon the figure-subject. There were to be two lovers. Holman Hunt says that mediæval lovers were dismissed as out of keeping with the wall, ordinary lovers as too commonplace, Cavalier and Puritan as done to death ; and that Millais began to fear that the wall might be wasted ; when some happy inspiration turned his thoughts to the Huguenots, and the picture as we now see it was the result. It was the first of the pictures that M. de la Sizeranne calls 'lovers' duets.' The French writer probably comes to such pictures with a prejudice against them ; and it is not a bad thing to do so. Holman Hunt says that he told Millais he did not think that lovers ought to be pried upon. But this picture justifies itself by the extreme tension under which these two lovers meet. The emotion it awakens is as solemn as that awakened by Watts's *Love and Death*. This is a particular instance of the great

human ordeal, of love having to make its account with death, of which Watts gave us a deeply impressive symbol. For this man and woman who love each other know that unless the man will consent to wear a badge that will belie his convictions the separation that death brings awaits them on the morrow. We may think of him as having won his way through doubt to what is, to him, a purer faith. We may think of her as having accepted, without reflection, that which she has been taught from childhood. Probably, as such women do, she has been sure that her lover in due time would embrace what is to her the true faith. He is mistaken, she has said to herself, and will find out his mistake. So the difference between them has given her little trouble. She has not reasoned with him; she would not know how to do it. She is right, he is wrong, he will come right; that is enough. Suddenly there falls the bolt from the blue. She has not reasoned, she cannot reason now; she can only appeal. Her faith is right; it cannot be wrong for him to wear its badge upon his arm. It will be his faith soon. Who has lived long and not seen played this tragedy of love? Now look at the man, whose faith is a hard-won possession, a pearl of great price that he has found after long search, and for the loss of which no other gain could compensate.

His love for the woman he embraces endures in a higher love, which may not be sacrificed to it. He can trust the lower to the higher, even though death come. He cannot renounce the higher merely to gratify the love which is but self-love once removed. Death must be faced. Will she, before they part, have learned how great a thing it is to love and be loved by one whose love is so noble and pure? Like the wall to the nasturtium and the ivy, will his love be a great support to her, raise her spirit where, though sorrow may trouble, it cannot crush, when at the morrow's daybreak the great bell gives the signal that will mean for them no meeting again until for her, as so soon for him, death shall be past?

M. de la Sizeranne's phrase is unjust to this particular picture, we are compelled to say.

All the detail, both in the figures and in the background, is painted with close literalness; and yet the detail is not obtrusive. Naturalism prevails, of course; yet there is subtle design of branch, leafage and flower in relation to the figures. Here, as in the case of other pictures, we may say that the natural detail is relevant to the subject; because it is, as hinted above, symbolic, in part, of the great trial of human nature that is being wrought amidst it.

There was danger to Millais in the popularity of

this picture. He had tasted blood! He wrote to a friend in June, 1852, that he had a subject he was mad to commence. This was the second of his pictures of lovers, *The Proscribed Royalist*. He found the landscape-setting he required in a wood near Hayes, in Kent; and began painting there the same month, finished the landscape in November, and painted the figures later; the model for the lady being Miss Ryan, who is also the lady in *The Huguenot*; the cavalier is the painter, Arthur Hughes, as already incidentally mentioned. Millais' power of faithful pictorial record is again in evidence in this picture. Here once more we may learn first to love things because we see how lovingly the artist has painted them. Here are the great, hollow bole of an ancient oak, lichen, mosses, ferns, vistas through the woodland, seen as a Richard Jefferies might see them, intently noting their every detail, hour by hour, on a summer's day. This, indeed, is how Millais saw them, not merely hour by hour, but day by day and week by week. In order to get the light on the dress exactly right he took it down to Hayes, fixed it on the lay-figure, and painted it on the spot.

We have in this picture no supreme test of human nature; but only an act of 'charity' or of love, we cannot be sure which, yet an act not without its ele-



ment of danger. Even a woman might not go unpunished if she succoured a cavalier. The story is well enough told. The man's demeanour suggests that we may read the woman's act as charity. Her expression leaves us in doubt. It is very subtle ; there is keen watchfulness, but no sense of personal fear ; there is an air of indifference, ready to chase away every other expression should danger of discovery arise ; there is a touch of hauteur which we may read, if we like, as contempt for the overweening pride of the victor.

Holman Hunt, we have seen, says that when Millais told him of his intention to paint a picture of Cavalier and Roundhead lovers he urged that the subject had been done to death. Such landscape as there is in this picture had not been done to death ; it had not been done before. Perhaps there would have been more gain than loss, if instead of these figures, there had been a squirrel, a rabbit, or at most a child. The landscape would then have had first place, which, on the whole, it deserves. In later pictures Millais gave landscape the first, even the sole place ; but not landscape painted as this is.

Millais' other picture of this year was *The Order of Release*, in which a landscape background is exchanged for the impenetrable shade of a prison apartment. Here



THE ORDER OF KITIASI

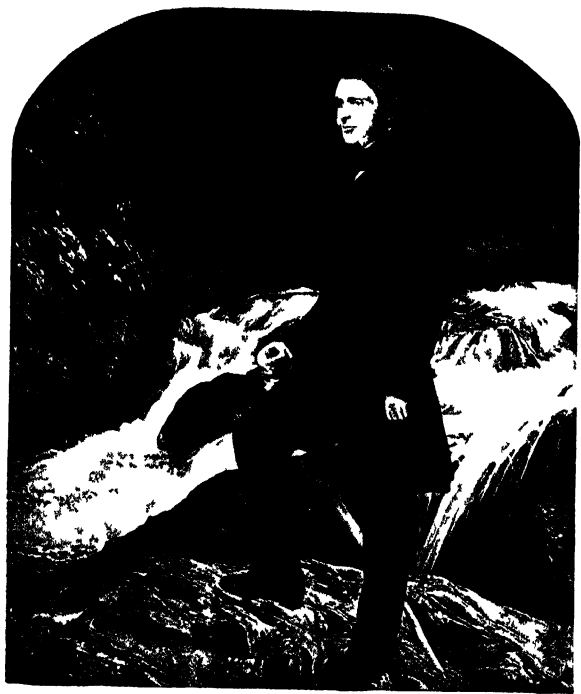


the figures are everything ; and they do their work well. The simple story is more than well told. It is like a reminiscence of Scott, or an anticipation—especially in the, as yet, ill-favoured child—of Stevenson. The critics complained that the gaoler had released the prisoner before reading the order of release. But has he? Or has he simply let him out of a cell into an outer apartment? This suggestion is at least not more trivial than the critics' objection. If mistake there be, it is dramatically useful ; and this would cover a multitude of sins against vulgar facts. The artist is able to show at the one moment, the husband's outbreak of emotion as he takes wife and child in his unwounded arm, the wife's exultation as she hands the order to the gaoler, and the collie's joy. The draughtsmanship of the figures is superb ; the happy combination of strong, varied, and not easily manageable colours has a fine tonic quality. This picture ranked high in Millais' estimation of his own work, and well it might.

An incident in connexion with the painting of it reminds the writer of an experience of his own. Millais was so keen to have every detail correct, that he actually obtained an order of release signed by the then Governor of Elizabeth Castle, Jersey, whose son, when he saw the picture exhibited, being unaware of the incident, was surprised to recognise his father's signature, so

carefully had Millais copied it. The present writer had on one occasion to send to Millais a letter of congratulation on behalf of a public body. His signature was inexcusably badly written, especially in the case of a peculiar, or, at least unfamiliar, name. Millais was clearly unable to decipher it, for on the envelope enclosing his reply he facsimiled the signature so skilfully as to show that had honest art failed him, and honesty not been in the bone and marrow of him, he might have achieved temporary success in the evil art of forgery, and eventually perhaps have wished for an order of release for himself!

In the summer of 1853, Millais and his brother William joined Mr. and Mrs. Ruskin—the 'wife in *The Order of Release* is an excellent portrait of the latter—in Scotland, and it was then, in Glenfinlas, that Millais painted the well-known portrait of Ruskin, standing on the rock by the stream-side. Ruskin, at the same time, made a characteristically minute study of a rock closely resembling, if it be not the identical one, the rock in the background of Millais' portrait of him. It is as Pre-Raphaelite as the work of the Pre-Raphaelites themselves. One of his own notes on the drawing is: 'Two months' work in what fair weather could be gleaned out of that time.' Perhaps the gleanings were not great, for the summer was a very wet



JOHN RUSKIN

From the picture in the possession of Admiral Sir W. A. Dyke Acland



one, even for Scotland. None the less the drawing is a marvel of patient labour ; and was used by Millais in completing his picture.

The portrait of Ruskin is obviously a good one, even to those who only knew him in later years. He wears the inevitable frock-coat, which was his garb in town and country alike. Ruskin's æstheticism did not concern itself with his own dress. All that a friend of the writer's, himself an ardent Ruskinite, could recollect in after years of a visit of Ruskin to his school was that the visitor wore a gorgeous blue tie and got the school a half-holiday ! Of what he said to the boys memory retained not a word !

This was the only picture of moment exhibited by Millais in 1854. Mr. Spielmann says that it is almost the last of the more accentuated P.R.B. pictures ; and perhaps only *The Blind Girl* among those to follow it can be compared with it in this respect. Still, Millais was yet to paint several genuinely Pre-Raphaelite pictures, of which the principal ones are considered in the following chapter.





### III

#### *MILLAIS' LATER PRE-RAPHAELITE PICTURES*

THE dust of strife was now being laid. The Brotherhood had lapsed rather than been actually dissolved. Rossetti, we have seen, ceased to exhibit after 1850. Early in 1854 Holman Hunt went to the East, and was lost to his friends for two years. 'Mjllais,' he says, 'came back from Scotland before my start. He had been painting Mr. Ruskin's portrait while away. . . . What a leave-taking it was with him in my heart when the train started! did other men have such a sacred friendship as that we had formed?'

In 1850 Millais had been elected an Associate of the Royal Academy; but it was found that he was under the qualifying age and the election was cancelled. In 1855 he was elected again, and so took the next step after his studentship towards the presidency he was years afterwards to hold. When Rossetti heard

of this his comment was that now the whole Round Table was dissolved.

Of the great change that was to take place in Millais' art within a few years' time there was as yet no sign. His pictures of 1855 were *The Rescue* and *A Random Shot*. The former shows the rescue of two children from a burning house by a fireman who is just delivering them to their rejoicing mother. A friend had taken Millais to see a fire, thinking that such a subject as this would just suit him; and the picture was painted hurriedly to be in time for the Academy. Ruskin wrote of it: 'The execution of the picture is remarkably bold—in some respects imperfect. I have heard it was hastily finished; but, except in the face of the child kissing the mother, it could not be much bettered. For there is a true sympathy between the impetuosity of execution and the haste of the action.' This is a significant admission that detail is not always in place. 'It is the only great picture of this year; but this is *very* great. The immortal element is in it to the full. It is easily understood, and the public very generally understand it.' Such was Ruskin's main conclusion about it. The critics demonstrated, uncontroversially this time, that the fire-glow was wrong in colour; but this error in fact did not diminish the picture's power. Thomas Spencer Baynes wrote to

commonplace as compared with the best of Millais' work.

There is a different tale to tell when we come to *Autumn Leaves* and *The Blind Girl*. No one finds fault with the terms of Ruskin's praise of the former of these pictures : 'By much the most poetical work the painter has yet conceived, and also, so far as I know, the first instance of a perfectly painted twilight. It is easy, as it is common, to give obscurity to twilight, but to give the glow within its darkness is another matter ; and though Giorgione might have come nearer the glow, he never gave the valley mist. Note also the subtle difference between the purple of the long nearer range of hills and the blue of the distant peak.' This is keen observation and analysis. But the ultimate appeal of the picture is to other, deeper faculties than the enjoyment of beautiful light and colour. Mr. Andrew Lang's 'You can hear the whisper of nature in the twilight,' written of this picture, takes us among these ultimate things ; as does Gray's

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,  
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,

while Tennyson's

Yet oft when sundown skirts the moor,  
An inner trouble I behold,



AUTUMN LEAVES



## LATER PRE-RAPHAELITE PICTURES 61

takes us where human hope strives against human fear. And thither we are taken by this picture when we consider the figures in relation to the landscape.

What is it, finally, that makes the twilight so impressive? Surely that our own familiar home-world is being gradually hidden from our sight; while the suns of unnumbered worlds, of which we know nothing, are slowly coming into view. Before oncoming night, as before oncoming death, we are face to face with the unknown. And in this picture we have not merely the passing of the day, but the passing of the year also. Dimly seen in the fading light, the gardener is raking together the fallen leaves, symbols of the lapse of human life. The girl who is adding leaves to the pile does so with gesture and look as of a priestess offering a sacrifice upon the altar; she feels the solemnity of the twilight and the fall of the year; her younger sister, who holds the basket, bright-eyed and merry, is too young to think of these things—‘What should she know of death?’ Beside these two children of the house are the gardener’s children; and how well the painter has marked the difference between them and the other two, who are perfectly at their ease, while the gardener’s children are awkwardly shy.

*Autumn Leaves* was painted at Annat Lodge, in

Perthshire. The landscape of *The Blind Girl* was painted, the foreground in Perthshire, and the background at Winchelsea; which Ruskin, from the passage quoted below, evidently did not know and recognise. The church that gleams white on the hill—not a little one, as Ruskin says, but a large one—is the one in which the child of *The Random Shot* lies asleep. One of the mediæval gatehouses of the town can be seen between the two rainbows. In *Autumn Leaves* we have the mystery of the twilight; here we have full sunlight flooding the landscape with splendour after rain. The painter has finely realised the intense vividness of light and colour, and the startling clearness of objects, both far and near, when seen against a dark mass of rain-cloud. I cannot forbear to quote Ruskin's description of the picture. 'The background is an open English common skirted by the tidy houses of a well-to-do village in the Cockney rural districts. I have no doubt the scene is a real one, within some twenty miles from London, and painted mostly on the spot. The houses are entirely uninteresting, but decent, trim, as human dwellings should be, and on the whole inoffensive—not "cottages," mind you, in any sense, but respectable brick-walled and slated constructions, old-fashioned in the sense of "old" at, suppose, Bromley or Sevenoaks, and with



THE BLIND GIRL





## LATER PRE-RAPHAELITE PICTURES 63

a pretty little church belonging to them, its window traceries freshly whitewashed by order of the careful warden. The common is a fairly spacious bit of ragged pasture, with a couple of donkeys feeding on it, and a crow or two, and at the side of the public road passing over it the blind girl has sat down to rest awhile. She is a simple beggar, not a poetical or vicious one; being peripatetic with musical instrument, she will, I suppose, come under the general term of tramp; a girl of eighteen or twenty, extremely plain-featured, but healthy, and just now resting, as any one of us would rest, not because she is much tired, but because the sun has but this moment come out after a shower, and the smell of the grass is pleasant. The shower has been heavy, and is so still in the distance, where an intensely bright double rainbow is relieved against the departing thunder-cloud. The freshly-wet grass is all radiant through and through with the new sunshine—full noon at its purest; the very donkeys bathed in the rain-dew, and prismatic with it under their rough breasts as they graze. The weeds at the girl's side are bright as a Byzantine enamel and inlaid with blue veronica; her upturned face all aglow with the light that seeks its way through her wet eyelashes (wet only with the rain). Very quiet she is—so quiet that a radiant butterfly has settled on her shoulder,

and basks there in the warm sun. Against her knee, on which the poor instrument of musical beggary rests (harmonium), leans another child half her age—her guide; indifferent, this one, either to sun or rain, only a little tired of waiting.’

Very different was the verdict of Rossetti on this picture from his verdict on *Peace Concluded*. He said that it was one of the most touching and perfect things he knew. To Madox Brown it was a religious picture and a glorious one. And so it is. Beautiful though it be, Ruskin’s description does not exhaust, it does little more than hint at, the picture’s deep significance, to which one little incident he does not mention gives the clue: the blind girl is drawing through her fingers the delicate stem of a harebell; she is finding through the sense of touch something of the beauty that she cannot see. At once there rushes upon us a sense of the great disinheritance of the blind; and inevitably, with our sorrow for them, comes a joyous recognition of all that the sense of sight means to us. And mark that only a Pre-Raphaelite picture could so fully bring these things home to us. An Impressionist picture, giving merely light and colour, could not do it; for the blind girl enjoys the warmth, and perhaps something of the glow of sunlight. But look at all that marvellously detailed beauty about and be-

## LATER PRE-RAPHAELITE PICTURES 65

hind her ; and think that if she turned towards what we see, she could not see it ! This one picture alone completely justifies Pre-Raphaelitism. Here is a subject purely pictorial ; no verbal explanation of it is necessary ; it sets before us nature in one of her most beautiful moments, and, by putting in the midst of the beauty one whose eyes are sealed to it, evokes our sympathy and at the same time exalts our sense of the marvellous gift of sight ; and no painter but one who loved and would patiently record the beauty of nature in the utmost detail visible to unaided human sight could have done this for us. He that hath eyes to see, the picture says to us, let him see !

Millais was to paint no more such landscape as this. He was to regard his early work merely as a discipline, as giving him, through the patient painting of things in as much detail as he could see, the power afterwards to paint them more suggestively, more as we see them as incidents in a scene we are taking in as a whole, yet without losing their main features and individuality. If there was gain in the change, there was also loss. We have now to see the coming of the change, to weigh the gain and loss, and to study, first the pictures of the time of change, and afterwards those painted when the new manner had been fully adopted.

## IV

### *THE TIME OF CHANGE*

RUSKIN, who in 1856 exclaims exultantly, 'Titian himself could hardly head him now,' will say of Millais the following year, 'The time has come when this painter must choose, and choose finally, whether the eminence he cannot abdicate is to make him conspicuous in honour, or in ruin.' What does this mean? We shall ask ourselves what justification there is for such language as we study Millais' later pictures. But to begin with, let us see what he himself, and his friend and fellow-painter Holman Hunt, have to say about the change in his art that called forth Ruskin's so vehement condemnation.

Millais himself seems to have foreseen that he might change: that he might, in Tennyson's phrase, passively take the print of a golden age. In one of his letters, to his friend Mr. Combe, he said, 'People had better buy my pictures now, when I am working for fame,

than a few years later, when I shall be married and working for a wife and children.' Holman Hunt, in 'Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood,' says that Millais swerved from his higher inspirations, but excuses him on the ground of the lack of appreciation with which his high endeavours were received by his countrymen. He quotes Millais as saying to him, 'I have striven hard in the hope that in time people would understand me and estimate my best productions at their true worth, but they (the public and private patrons) go like a flock of sheep after any bell-wether who clinks before them. I have, up to now, generally painted in the hope of converting them to something better, but I see they won't be taught, and as I *must* live, they shall have what they want, instead of what I know would be best for them. A physician sugars his pill, and I must do the same.' Again Holman Hunt quotes Millais as saying, 'I want proof that the people of my day enjoy my work, and ~~how can I get this better than by finding people willing to give me money for my productions, and that I win honours from contemporaries.~~ . . . Set to work to meet the taste of our own day, and not that of the future, and you will soon get over your difficulties. Why, I've just sold a picture done in two weeks which will pay the expenses of all my family, my

shooting and fishing too, for our whole time in Scotland.' Commenting on these and similar utterances, Holman Hunt says, 'Thus Millais, with ever transparent impulsiveness, revealed his tempered convictions to direct me to a prudent course. My ever affectionate confidant of student days, being widely known for his excellent qualities, was at this time a favourite of society, dividing the honours of contemporary recognition with Leighton, although the latter enjoyed the higher dignity of President of the Royal Academy.'

For Millais' sake one might wish to be able to think that a touch of envy had coloured these reminiscences of what he said to his friend. But we have his own forecast of what he was likely to do. We have also what he actually did. Here is something else that Holman Hunt reports, and that the facts substantiate: 'For my part I paint what there is a demand for. There is a fashion going now for little girls in mob caps. Well, I satisfy this while it continues; but immediately the demand shows signs of flagging, I am ready to take to some other fashion of the last century which people now are keen on, or I shall do portraits or landscapes.' This is not a noble confession. Yet it is exactly what Rossetti saw him to be doing already in 1856, with *Peace Concluded*. When Holman Hunt protested that if everyone acted thus the

world would not advance, and that if Millais were right all the great reformers, including Socrates, were wrong, Millais replied that they were wrong, and that Socrates deserved to die for setting himself up in opposition to the appointed teachers of the people. Perhaps it is the same conversation that Mr. Spielmann quotes differently. According to his version, Holman Hunt had reminded Millais that Christ himself had been an agitator, and Millais retorted, 'Yes, and he got stoned! And quite right, too, from the point of view of people who saw nothing of his divinity—only his agitation. That's all I'd have seen if I'd been there; I'm afraid I'd have thrown stones too!' Mr. Spielmann says that this gives us a glimpse of the intense realism and vivid common-sense that made Millais so remarkable an individuality among the most illustrious of his associates. Incidentally we may say that, if this be the right point of view, it condemns the Pre-Raphaelite movement, with its opposition to established authority, to the priests of the academic temple, and largely if not entirely justifies the adverse critics of the movement.

Mr. Spielmann, however, furnishes evidence that Millais was not without pricks of conscience, telling us of an incident that happened when the exhibition of his works was held at the



Grosvenor Gallery in 1886; and not more than half his pictures were insured for a quarter of a million sterling, clear proof of his intense realism and vivid common-sense. Millais had been to the exhibition, and went to Leighton's house to dine. We are told that in an exhausted tone he called for champagne, and then said, 'I've been seeing all my old work!—all my past misdeeds have been rising up against me! Oh, the vulgarity of some of them, my dear fellow! The vulgarity! *But some fine things, mind you!*' Mr. Spielmann says that 'vulgarity' was perhaps the worst-chosen word of any to apply to his work. Let us turn to Holman Hunt again, who, after saying that 'the demand for trivial incidents was steady, and Millais, being encouraged to seek these, often displayed great taste in their selection and treatment,' and after instancing several pictures as good in this kind, adds: 'But some which it is needless to instance, however excellent in workmanship, must have been done simply to meet the vulgar demand.' Vulgar things ~~supply~~ a vulgar demand.

What occasion was there for Millais to do trivial, vulgar things? Holman Hunt says that the British public, and the critics in particular, were to blame. Millais was unable to obtain a decent livelihood by means of his best work, so he did less than his best. 'Surely,' says

his friend, 'a man of genius has a right to marry when he has established his commanding position, and being married he is called upon to support his family.' He instances the early recognition of Raphael's genius. But Raphael's art did not, as did Millais' early art, run counter to the traditions of his time. It would have been more appropriate, but would not have supported Holman Hunt's case, to instance the career of Rembrandt. The fact is that Millais, without stooping from his best, could have supported a family in comfort, even in moderate luxury. But he set himself the standard of costly luxury. For his recreation he must have a shooting in the Highlands. He said he needed this to go on with his work ; but he would have done better work had he not produced so much in order to maintain the luxury. Burne-Jones contrasted French and English artists in this respect ; and even if the contrast were not well founded, it would remain a severe condemnation of what so frequently happens in this country. Of the French artists he said : 'The skill and ~~clarity~~ in their work, and singleness of purpose and *esprit de corps*, their indifference to comfort and luxury, and even necessary food, proves them to be a set of splendid gentlemen whom it would be difficult to match in this country, which I do think is spoiled and sullied by wealth. I feel a constant irre-

pressible hope in the French—they try experiments for the smug world outside to profit by. I should like a splendid school of painting yet to come out of France. Most of them, even of the big ones, are quite poor, and the sight of a poor gentleman makes me feel the world is worth redeeming and can be redeemed.’

Millais, however, had no need to fear poverty at the time he began to work below his best. In 1853, he sold *The Order of Release* for £400, and, at the Academy, a policeman had to keep the crowd before it on the move. In October, 1852, he could write of both this picture and *The Proscribed Royalist* as commissions, and could say: ‘It is quite a “lark” now to see the amiable letters I have from Liverpool and Birmingham merchants, requesting me to paint them pictures, any size, subject, and amount I like—leaving it all to me. I am not likely to let them have anything, as they would probably hawk it about until they obtained their profit.’ This is not the language of a man of middle age, who has come to his own after wrestling with disappointment for long years. Millais was at this time only twenty-three years old! Holman Hunt says that Millais, having established his commanding position, and married, and having a family to support, ‘found himself driven to

despair and want of faith, in the possibility of teaching his countrymen the value of poetic art.' In 1852 he was three years away from being married, and yet could write of merchants commissioning pictures of which size, subject, and price were left to him! Less than a year after he married he could write to his wife, respecting *Peace Concluded*, *Autumn Leaves*, and *The Blind Girl*: 'I cannot express the success of the pictures. It is far beyond our most sanguine expectations. I have increased the price of all three, which I shall get without any difficulty; and my studio has been already filled with eager purchasers begging me to remember them next year.' He says further: 'This great mercy from God is very awful, and I cannot help feeling a little nervous about it, fearing a possible turn in my fortune.' He observes that his style is beginning to differ from that of Holman Hunt, and says: 'What Ruskin and the critics are to do, I don't know; but it will be great fun for us.' And ~~these~~ are the pictures that Ruskin praised, not merely generously, ~~but~~ with enthusiasm! The critics, he finds, after the Academy Press-day, are rather worse than ever; but he does not expect any better treatment from the Press in his lifetime, as it is too intimately mixed up with the profession. It was not his countrymen at large, the much-abused British public,

who were to blame, as Holman Hunt suggests, for there was no getting near the pictures at the opening; but he cannot tell his wife of the incivility of certain of the members of the Royal Academy and their cantankerous and jealous criticisms and ungenerosity. But it is nothing new to him, he has seen it for some years.

Holman Hunt says that Millais had a right to be impatient when, in 1859, his *Vale of Rest* did not immediately find a purchaser; that having been before the world for ten or more years, and added to the glory of modern art, he ought not to have been merely securing a tardy livelihood, but to have had the ampler opportunities of exercising his genius that the old masters had; that he ought not to have been painting for the general dealer and buyer but for the nation. Well, Watts desired such opportunities, and did not get them; but he did not in disgust take to painting popular pot-boilers. When Millais, though denied these great opportunities, could sell *The Vale of Rest* for seven hundred guineas, he might at least have taken courage, and still have always given of his best. But no; because he *must* live, the public should have what they wanted, not what he knew would be best for them. So the public got the little girls in mob-caps, applauded, and paid; and Millais, by a fortnight's

work, could cover the expenses of a family holiday, and of shooting and fishing, in the Highlands!

The changes that began to show themselves in Millais' work after 1856, and that became more and more accentuated and eventually fully established, were, first, the substitution of suggestion for patient elaboration of detail, and, secondly, a lack of poetry, of imagination and intense feeling, in many of his pictures, and readiness to choose trivial subjects.

With reference to the first of these two changes it is interesting to note the following passage in a letter written by Millais to Mr. Combe in 1851: 'Early works are generally the standard specimens of artists, as great success blunts enthusiasm, and little by little men get into carelessness, which is construed by idiotic critics into a nobler handling.' Yet when, in 1859, Ruskin refused to be one of these idiotic critics, and found in Millais' work 'a careless and insolent indication of things that might be; not the splendid promise of ~~a~~ grand impatience, but the scrabbled remnant of a scornfully abandoned aim,' Millais, anticipating something of this kind, had written just previously of Ruskin in a letter to his wife: 'He does not understand my work, which is now too broad for him to appreciate, and I think his eye is only fit to judge the portraits of insects. But then, I think he has lost all real influence

as a critic.' Surely it was a little hard to turn on Ruskin like this when Millais, in the letter just quoted, had condemned himself, and approved Ruskin's criticism, in advance.

All the same it is not necessary, notwithstanding what Millais had said at an earlier date, to think that he sinned against his artist's conscience in changing to a broader manner. Nor is it necessary wholly to agree with Ruskin; though it may be regretted that Millais was to paint no more with his earlier thoroughness in detail. It has already been urged here that the detail was more appropriate for some subjects than for others; and Ruskin himself could say that there was a true sympathy between the impetuousness of execution in *The Rescue* and the haste of the action. Still, would it have been better if Millais had almost entirely abandoned his earlier manner as a mere discipline to be laid aside when its purpose had been served? For this, as already said, was how he came to regard it. While painting one of his later landscapes he said to a friend of the present writer, 'This looks easy, does it not? But I could not do it had I not first painted *Autumn Leaves*.' We cannot doubt that, however much we have gained by the change, we have suffered at least considerable loss. We should have been far richer could our public galleries have had more land-

scape like that of *Autumn Leaves* and *The Blind Girl*. For what Millais gave afterwards was not another interpretation of nature, but only a watered version of the old one. He did not set himself to render light and atmosphere as the Impressionists, and some of our English painters who have learned from them, have done. He did not record transitory effects of gleam or gloom, or seek to interpret nature in her many moods. He did not, as Watts did, interpret nature in large symbolic terms. We can hardly say perhaps that what he had previously done carefully he now did carelessly; for he did not wish to give the detail. Yet we have seen his brother saying that in 'his glorious early days not an iota was slurred over, but that every beauty in nature met with its due appreciation at his hands.' Slurring over is too strong an expression for the suppression of detail for the sake of the general effect. There *are* instances of slurring over, of really slovenly work, spoiling the general effect. But these are the exception. Our complaint is, with regard to landscape, that we gained nothing from Millais' change of style to compensate us for what he might have done, what he *would have* done, we dare to say, had he not wholly abandoned his earlier style. This is more fully discussed in the chapter dealing with his landscape art.



With regard to subject-pictures and portraits the change of style is not so much, is perhaps little, if at all, to be regretted. We do not want a painfully literal painting of chairs, tables, wallpapers and so forth, or of articles of dress—though even here what are we to say of the work of the early Flemish painters, of Van Eyck's *Jan Arnolfini and his Wife*, to give only one example? Is there no place for such pictures as this except with an apology? As to the figures in subject-pictures, and portraits: there are old, dry map-like figures and portraits that are full of character; but the character is to be had without the dryness; and one would not care to have very many portraits like Millais' early one of his friend Mr. Combe, or Holman Hunt's of Professor Owen. Finally, I have no wish to take up a dogmatic position, uncompromisingly for or against Pre-Raphaelitism, but only to maintain that Holman Hunt's work, the early work of Millais, and that of their Pre-Raphaelite followers, has a distinct and permanent value; and that Millais' change of style was not necessarily an unmixed good.

The lower quality of imagination and feeling in Millais' later, as compared with his earlier work, is matter of common consent. How could there but be a falling-away when a man who had begun by striving to do the finest things of which his art was capable,

descended to the painting of little girls in mob-caps or any other trivial thing that would please the popular taste?

His son and biographer, apropos of Rossetti's remarking, on hearing of Millais' election as A.R.A., 'so now the whole round table is dissolved,' supposes Rossetti to have meant that Millais would cease to support the heterodox principles that until then he had so strongly upheld; and says that nothing could be further from his thoughts. Perhaps not. But the change was soon to come for all that. Mr. Spielmann expresses the opinion that it was when the whole round table was dissolved, when Millais lost the support of Dante Rossetti's fervid imagination, of Holman Hunt's powerful intellect and resolution, of the analytical mind of Mr. William Rossetti and the literary outlook of F. G. Stephens, that his work failed in intellect and imagination. Millais' biographer naturally resents this suggestion; but the only alternative is one far less complimentary to Millais: that even more deliberately than otherwise we need suppose him to have done, he thought and wrought below his best. It is pleasanter to think of him as stimulated by the companionship and enthusiasm of the members of the Brotherhood to do better than his unaided best, and then, when they separated, to have done what was in

him independently to do, than to think severely of him as a lost leader.

Millais himself, according to a story told by Mr. Spielmann, repudiated the suggestion that he 'played to the crowd': he once exclaimed, 'If I wanted to paint a popular picture I should paint an old man in spectacles, reading his Bible by the fireside; and the fire would be reflected on his spectacles. And I should paint a tear running down by his nose; and the fire would be reflected in the tear. That would be a "popular" picture, I can tell you!' Mr. Spielmann says that his not painting this picture must surely be accounted to him for righteousness. Well, it does make one shudder to think that had the mob-caps failed he might have painted it; and the mob-caps, if what Holman Hunt records does not misrepresent Millais, cannot easily be accounted to him for righteousness. He was approximating to his ideal of a popular picture when he painted *A Good Resolve*, thus described in the catalogue of the 1898 exhibition of his works: 'Three-quarter figure of a girl, in a blue figured bodice and brown skirt, standing to right at a table, with her right forefinger on a page of an open Bible.'

Sir Walter Armstrong, writing in Millais' lifetime, and entirely approving of his change from a literal to

a suggestive rendering of detail, says of his later pictures : 'From about 1870 onwards we find Millais devoting much less inventive effort to his subjects than in his earlier time. The slightest incident that gives a chance to make a picture of a pretty woman or child is enough.' We need not urge this point further ; and will end this discussion by repeating that though Millais did not in his later years do all that might have been expected of him, what he did was still a considerable achievement.

## V

### BETWEEN TWO STYLES

LET us turn now to the pictures painted by Millais in his time of change. Ruskin had noticed signs of slovenliness and imperfection in the pictures of 1856, but thought them accidental, and consequent probably on a too exultant trial of his new powers. The pictures of the following year undeceived him. They were *Sir Isumbras at the Ford* and *The Escape of a Heretic*. 'The change in his manner, from the years of *Ophelia* and *Mariana* to 1857,' said Millais' erstwhile champion, 'is not merely Fall—it is Catastrophe; not merely a loss of power, but a reversal of principle; his excellence has been effaced, "as a man wipeth a dish—wiping it, and turning it upside down."' Yet *Sir Isumbras* evidently moved Ruskin mightily, for it called forth a passage eloquent even for him. 'The thought of the picture,' he wrote in his notes on the Academy pictures of the year, 'was a noble one, and



SIR ISL HAYS AT THE FORD



might seem both justly to claim, and tenderly to encourage, the utmost skill and patience in its rendering. It does not matter whether we take it as a fact or as a type : whether we look verily upon an old knight riding home in the summer twilight, with the dust of his weary day's journey on his golden armour, taking the woodman's children across the river with him, holding the girl so tenderly that she does not so much as feel the grasp of the gauntlets, but holds the horse's mane as well, lest she should fall ; or whether we receive it as a type of noble human life, tried in all war, and aged in all counsel, finding its crowning work at last to be bearing the children of poverty in its arms, and that the best use of its panoply of battle is to be clasped by the feeble fingers, wearied with gathering the sheddings of the autumnal woods. It might bear even a deeper meaning than this : it might be an image less of life than of the great Christian Angel of Death, who gives the eternal nobleness to small and great, and clasps the mean and the mighty with his golden armour—Death, bearing the two children with him across the calm river, whither they know not ; one questioning the strange blue eyes which she sees fixed on heaven, the other only resting from his labour, and feeling no more his burden.' Curiously enough, although the picture could call forth this eloquent, and



more than eloquent, noble, passage, the writer goes on to say that under certain conditions it would have said such things to those who saw it : ' All this, and much more than this—for the picture might be otherwise suggestive to us in a thousand ways—it would have brought home at once to the heart of every spectator, had the idea but been realised with any steadiness of purpose or veracity of detail. As it stands, it can only be considered as a rough sketch of a great subject, injudiciously exposed to general criticism, and needing both modification in its arrangement and devoted labour in its future realisation.' But the faults in the picture were such as probably not one spectator in a thousand would detect : ' painting figures in twilight as bright as yellow and vermilion can make them, while the towers and hills, far above and more exposed to light, are yet dark and blue,' ' painting the water brighter than the sky it reflects,' no ripple of water against the horse, or ripple of chance spray, and so forth ; all which is legitimate criticism as to the rendering of fact, though by no means, all of it, unquestionable criticism, but does not impair either the ' message ' or the beauty of the picture.

Millais' biographer tells us that when the picture was exhibited at the Academy it was greeted with howls of execration. There were the lion's roar of Ruskin and the jackal's yelp of his followers. But Ruskin's earlier

praise, which Millais accepted, implied future blame if the painter did the opposite of that which called forth the praise. And in view of the passage just quoted, it is not true to say, as the biographer does say, 'the great critic could see in it no single point for admiration.'

The picture was bought by Charles Reade, who said that he could write a whole three-volume novel on it, and then have sentiment enough to spare! Clearly its defects did not hinder its appeal to him. 'Either I am an idiot,' he wrote later, 'or it is an immortal work.'

Mr. Spielmann endorses Ruskin's criticisms as to mistakes in facts, even after some changes made by Millais, but then says that the picture remains one of the most splendid, imaginative and impressive works that Millais ever painted, and the most decorative of them all, with a more formal sense of design than any other. 'The knight's head, he says, however, is not so much that of a warrior as of a modern tradesman, kindly and garrulous, for, all the bright intelligence in the eyes.' Alas! we read in the biography that Colonel Campbell, an officer quartered in Perth, sat for the figure of the knight! 'He took me for a fish-monger!' Appearances are deceptive, and one has surely seen tradesmen who looked as military as the gallant colonel. And he does look modern, and

somehow, so do the children; and the landscape, because landscape apart from buildings and cultivation is of no particular age, looks modern, and we are surprised to see two nuns walking by a Scotch river. Would the picture have gained or lost, if, instead of a mediæval knight, the kindly old man had been a modern laird or soldier? The girl might still have been as much in awe of him; and this leads me to say that her expression is one of Millais' best pieces of child portrayal.

One wishes, after looking for a time at the still—after Millais had tried to improve it—wooden-looking horse and its riders, that they would pass by, and leave us to unhindered enjoyment of the landscape, which is beautiful and poetic enough to be a picture in itself and not a mere background; and the figures here do not harmonise quite so completely with the mood of the landscape as those in *Autumn Leaves* with the landscape there. But when all is said, where is *Sir Isumbras* to find its equal in its own kind?

The other picture of this year, *The Escape of a Heretic*, is sheer melodrama. We can almost hear the applause of the gallery at the defeat of the villain, in this case a monk, and the rescue of the lady by her lover. She has been condemned as a heretic; prior to being burned at the stake she has been dressed in

the 'San Benito' garments, with the black demons on a yellow ground. But her lover, disguised as a monk, gains access to her, gags the monk-gaoler with the aid of his own rosary, and proceeds to disguise the lady in a monk's gown. The one visible eye of the monk, fixed in terror on the rescuer's dagger, would convulse a theatre with laughter. The picture was painted as a pendant to *The Huguenot*; but is not to be mentioned in the same breath with that noble picture. Ruskin was very angry over it, calling it coarse and ghastly in action, condemning the type of foot for a Spanish lady's, 'the monstrous protrusion of the lover's lip in his intense appeal for silence,' and more than these things, 'the dwelling perpetually upon the harshest lines of form, and most painful conditions of expression.' He saw in it a wilful preference of ugliness to beauty. Mr. Spielmann, who says much the same kind of thing about the picture as Ruskin, thinks that the influence of Ford Madox Brown is visible in it. This is interesting in view of the fact that Ruskin never wrote a line either in praise or blame of Madox Brown; and suggests that one reason for this silence was the painter's frequent neglect of beauty in his desire for vigour and expressiveness. As melodrama this picture is excellent. Only is it to that kind of thing a Millais should devote his powers?

The following year, 1858, Millais did not exhibit a single picture, but the next year brought one that could not fail to arouse hot discussion, *The Vale of Rest*, now in the National Gallery of British Art. Two nuns, one of whom is digging a grave, while the other is seated near her, are in a graveyard at sunset. The seated one is supposed to have noticed a purple, coffin-shaped cloud in the sunset-sky, and to accept it, in accordance with a Scotch superstition, as a premonition of approaching death. This is the picture of which the delay in finding a purchaser Holman Hunt thinks Millais was quite justified in feeling keenly. But would not some who recognised its merit hesitate to take it home and live with it? The subject may not be morbid, though doubtless many would feel it to be so, but it certainly is not cheerful—one woman digging a grave and another receiving what is to her a warning of approaching death. In the memory of 'Punch,' 1859 remained as 'the year Mr. Millais gave forth those terrible nuns in the graveyard.' Ruskin, in his note on the picture, assumed that the beholder would be considerably offended at first sight of it. It seemed to him to express unwholesome, deathly, because unhelpful convent sentiment. He thought the painter might have intended this to be felt: 'it may be that he supposed we should have been offended if we had seen



THE VALE OF REST



the real nun digging her real grave ; that she and it might have appeared to us not altogether pathetic, romantic, or sublime, but only strange or horrible ; and that he chooses to fasten this sensation upon us rather than any other.' People, said Ruskin further, called it frightful, which he thought was perhaps what it was intended to be, the contrast between the beautiful landscape, 'the dark green field, and windless trees, and purple sky,' and the sorrowful task of the grave-digging nun, being of set purpose intensified by the ugliness of the nuns' faces—Millais, it should be said, subsequently repainted the head of the seated nun. Mr. Spielmann, on the other hand, writes of it as 'one of the most beautiful—alike in colour and sentiment—of all the artist's works.' If we interpret the picture from a certain point of view—the convent point of view, we may say—then the sentiment is beautiful. Even John Wesley could write : 'O lovely appearance of death.' The nun in Tennyson's 'St. Agnes' Eve' says, in words that Millais illustrated—

Deep on the convent-roof the snows  
Are sparkling to the moon :  
My breath to Heaven like vapour goes :  
May my soul follow soon !

If this kind of thing be mawkish or morbid then so is the picture ; unless, as Ruskin suggested, the painter



meant to show 'convent sentiment' to be something strange and horrible. So we must leave it—*chacun à son goût*. Anyhow, we cannot be surprised that the picture did not meet with immediate, general acceptance. That while some received it with enthusiasm others as vehemently rejected it, by no means proves that there was a cabal against Millais, as he thought and as his biographer avers. There may have been such a cabal; but there was good ground in honest divergence of thought and feeling for adverse criticism of the picture.

The landscape, in time of day and year, and in the kind of emotional appeal it makes, closely resembles that of *Autumn Leaves*; but a subtle change has taken place in the painter's treatment of it. There is not the same careful observation and record; there is not the same intensity of glow and colour. One who from his official position in the world of art ought to have known better, once remarked, before this picture, that it was interesting as showing that Millais never had been a Pre-Raphaelite. It does show that, when he painted it, he was ceasing to be one.

The other pictures exhibited along with *The Vale of Rest* were *The Love of James I of Scotland*, one of the least successful of Millais' subject-pictures, and *Apple Blossoms*, at first called *Spring*, which Ruskin found to

be still mighty painting, though he declared the orchard to be fierce and rigid, angrily blooming with petals, as it were, of japanned brass. Was there too much, rather than too little labour this time, for the orchard, painted on the spot, was a long time in the painting? The figures also displeased Ruskin: some were unsightly, he said, others preternaturally grim. It suggested to him an Inferno for young ladies who had been vainly gay, and, under red-hot apple-blossom, had now to sip scalding milk out of a poisoned porringer! To the present writer the ladies appear to be quite pleasant people, not of the kind given to extremes of vain gaiety, and at the moment looking as if they were awkwardly and self-consciously grouped to have a photograph taken. Possibly the scythe, part of which appears at the right side of the picture, might be taken to have some grim suggestiveness, like the scythe of the reaper Death in the famous Pisan fresco. The picture is a not very satisfactory portrait-group, stiffly arranged not in, but in front of, a formally planted orchard.

The one important picture of 1860 was *The Black Brunswicker*. There were no notes by Ruskin on the Academy exhibition this year—no more, indeed, until 1875; so the poor painter was now free from the outspoken criticisms which had hitherto for five years

made their annual appearance. When after fifteen years' interval Ruskin wrote the notes just once again, he gave as one reason for having discontinued them that he was told of a young artist who had said of him, 'D—— the fellow! why doesn't he back his friends?' This led him to conclude that it was 'useless, so far as artists were concerned, to continue criticism which they would esteem dishonourable unless it was false.' So far as Millais was concerned Ruskin could certainly not be accused of saying smooth things to please a friend! Millais might have quoted the prophet's words used at first instead of a title for *Christ in the House of his Parents*, "What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends"; for the answerer here is a prophet wounded for prophesying falsely; and, in large measure, this was the ground upon which, justly or unjustly, Ruskin adversely criticised so much of Millais' later work.

The public, we are told, greeted *The Black Brunswicker* with enthusiasm. The Press received it somewhat coldly. And the Press was right; though Millais, we are told, no longer paid any attention to its anonymous criticisms. A dealer, the previous year, had said to him, 'Why don't you give us the

Huguenot again?' Whether upon this hint or not Millais tried to give him again, in the guise of an officer in the famous black-habited German cavalry regiment bidding farewell to his English lady-love before starting out for Quatre Bras or Waterloo, while she fondly seeks to detain him. Millais was enthusiastic over the subject, was confident it would be a prodigious success, in which belief he was confirmed by Russell, the 'Times' correspondent, 'the best man for knowing the public taste.' They were right. Gambart, the dealer, bought the picture for one thousand guineas; and who has not seen the engraving of it?

But a miracle cannot be encored, Russell Lowell tells us, and if *The Huguenot* was not a miracle, it was a great thing, and great things are not easily repeated. This picture does not repeat the earlier one, although Millais intended it to be a pendant picture. It would not be kind to this one to hang it in the same room with the other. Millais was at fault in challenging comparison. The subject had not in it the same elements of deep, in a sense, tragic, yet inspiring, human interest, as those in the parting of the Huguenot and his Catholic lady-love. Millais had now to stake much, if not everything, on finding subjects that would please the multitude, to repeat, superficially at least, past popular successes. Sometimes he would find a

subject worthy of his great executive skill that would also please ; sometimes, not. But the essential thing was to please, and to please the many, whatever the few thought.

The painting in this picture is competent. The stiff, gleaming satin dress drew plaudits. There is nearly detail enough, see the wall-paper and the grain of the wood on the door, to please Ruskin ; though he would not be likely to think such detail of much value. But the general result is commonplace. The spaniel, by the way, is an early example of Millais' sympathetic animal-painting. Its mistress is in trouble ; dumbly it pleads for her. And doubtless this incident aided the picture's plea for popularity.

In 1861 and 1862 there came only pictures of minor interest. We may note that by this time Millais was doing a good deal of black-and-white work for book-illustrations, to which reference is made later in this book. In 1863 he exhibited what is now held by some to be the best of all his works, *The Eve of St. Agnes*. The subject was suggested by Keats' poem, which, in the "old student-days, had furnished Holman Hunt with the subject of the picture on which Millais also worked. The maiden, Madeline, stands in the moonlight undressing, because

They told her, how upon St. Agnes' Eve,  
Young virgins might have visions of delight,  
And soft adorings from their loves receive  
Upon the honey'd middle of the night,  
If ceremonies due they did aright ;  
As, supperless to bed they must retire,  
And couch supine their beauties, lily white ;  
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require  
Of heaven, with upward eyes for all that they desire.

The picture was painted, by moonlight, with a bull's-eye lantern turned on the canvas, in a room at Knole House that had been left unchanged since the time of James I. Three days and a half at Knole—quite long enough in a cold room in an old house otherwise inhabited only by a caretaker, as he and his wife, she standing for the figure of Madeline, found—and a further two days at home, and the picture was finished. 'The moonlight air'—in Wordsworth's phrase—in the midst of which the girl stands in easy, graceful attitude—is subtly rendered ; its gleam broken by the shadows cast by window-mullions, and gradually dying away in the dim recesses of the room.

One would have thought it would have been generally appreciated. But Henry Sidgwick wrote in a letter : ' I just had three-quarters of an hour at the Academy. I cannot conceive anyone except a painter admiring the ghostly St. Agnes. I believe

technically it is well done, except that the garment wreathed about her feet cannot possibly have fallen down into that shape.' This seems to substantiate what Val Prinsep wrote to Millais when the picture passed into his possession : ' For the profession's sake I am glad your picture is in the hands of one of the craft, for it is essentially a painter's picture. After all, what do the public and the critics know about the matter? Nothing! The worst is, they think they do, and hence comes the success of many a commonplace work and the comparative neglect of what is full of genius. I've got the genius bit and am delighted.' This would take us at least some way towards the conclusion that only painters should buy pictures. But the public and the critics may take heart from what the then President of the Royal Academy, Sir Francis Grant, as recorded on the page in the biography of Millais where Val Prinsep's letter is quoted, said about the picture that was 'a genius bit' in Prinsep's estimation : ' I cannot bear that woman with the gridiron! ' The gridiron was made of the shadows cast by the window-mullions! Perhaps, however, Presidents of the Royal Academy are not necessarily artists. Val Prinsep's contempt for the public, it may be added, and his desire, none the less, to profit by the public, may or may not explain the

low level of commonplace above which his own art never rose.

Sidgwick's comment on the picture, however, has much significance. It was an admission on the part of an educated man that he could not appreciate a subtle rendering of a beautiful effect of light and colour : that he had no eye for visible music. This is relatively true of the mass of the public as compared with artists, and of the mass of artists as compared with a few singularly gifted ones. The colour-sense has been slowly and unequally developed in humanity. Only a few people recall in terms of colour what they have seen. In the memory of most people the world is so much form in monochrome. One function of the true artist is to awaken the colour-sense in his fellow-men. But it cannot be said that the Pre-Raphaelites had kept this aim to the front. Their pictures had made two chief claims upon attention : subject-interest, and detailed rendering of fact. Sensuous beauty, of course, was not ruled out. Some measure of it is implied in even a more literal setting-forth of detail than that of the Pre-Raphaelites, if such, unless literally microscopic, be possible. But subject and fact were kept to the front. If even the educated public did not readily respond to music of light and colour, the artists themselves must



take some of the blame. In the very same year in which *The Eve of St. Agnes* was painted Millais could almost invite the public not to see its beauty by painting, in a commonplace manner, such an *ad captandum* picture as *My First Sermon*, a little girl, at church for the first time, sitting bolt upright in a high-backed pew, and learning an early lesson in make-believe by appearing to take an interest in what she cannot understand. The Archbishop of Canterbury was touched by this presentation of the innocence, the purity, and, he ventured to add, the piety of childhood. When, the following year, *My Second Sermon* showed the same child, under the same circumstances, very sensibly, had it not been inevitably, fallen asleep, the Archbishop did not rebuke her for want of piety, but found in her silent slumber a warning of the evil of lengthy sermons and drowsy discourses! This was quite a wise finding; but it turns to something worse than nonsense what he read into the former picture.

Henry Sidgwick's comment on *My First Sermon* and *The Wolf's Den*, another child-picture exhibited at the same time, was: 'The other two of Millais' are wonderfully well painted: only I am vexed at a man of his wonderful execution deliberately choosing such trivial subjects. There used to be some poetry in

him; where is it gone to? His inspiration seems now about the level of Mrs. Henry Wood's novels.' Surely he was right. *My First Sermon* and *My Second Sermon* are trivial, not because they have child-life for subject, but because they treat that subject in a trivial, superficial way, instead of opening out to us the depths of the child's nature. It is another matter, of course, if we see in the two pictures, taken together, what the Archbishop dimly saw, the moral and spiritual tragedy of putting a child in a false position. That is hardly the lesson, however, that has hitherto been learned from the pictures, and probably not what the painter intended. It has been said that *My First Sermon* was the first of the pictures that brought Millais into competition with Sir Joshua Reynolds as a painter of children. But *The Woodman's Daughter*, *Autumn Leaves* and *Sir Isumbras at the Ford* were studies of children far more profound than anything Reynolds ever did, and perhaps than anything that Millais did after them. Millais had no need to enter into competition with Reynolds; and if he consciously did so, his own and our loss in the inferiority of his later to his earlier child-pictures is thereby, in part at least, explained. If one must make an exception in Reynolds' general inferiority to Millais, it would be, I think, in respect of the earliest stage of life. I doubt if

Millais ever interpreted infancy as wonderfully as Reynolds did in *The Duchess of Devonshire and Child*, and—to put the best second—*Mrs. Hoare and Child*.

It is no part of the purpose of this little book to give a complete chronological list of Millais' paintings. This has been done again and again; and chronology is used here only as a means to an end: to elucidate the changes in Millais' art. We therefore pass lightly over the years between 1863 and 1868, during which period much of what Millais produced was of quite secondary interest. *The Enemy Sowing Tares*, of 1865, was a powerful picture, to which reference is made later; and *The Minuet* of the following year is one of the most charming of his slighter child-studies. The *Sleeping* and *Waking* of 1867, beyond being admirable examples of technical skill in the representation of bed-clothes and furniture, and showing us, as, of course, Millais could do, a child asleep, and a child just awakened out of sleep, have no particular interest. It is remarkable that these two pictures and *The Minuet*, all exhibited in 1867, show almost a complete return to his Pre-Raphaelite thoroughness, immediately before his final abandonment of it. In fact, in this very year, he was painting *Rosalind and Celinde*, in which, his son says, 'two or three broad streaks of

the brush express exactly a fallen leaf which a few years before would have been highly worked up.' Yet nothing was lost, we are told. We have already given reason, and shall give further reason, for thinking that something was lost.



## VI

### *THE LATER SUBJECT-PICTURES*

HITHERTO we have kept to chronological order in considering Millais' pictures. This, having brought him to the time of his final change of style, we now leave to consider them as subject-pictures, pictures of children, portraits and landscapes ; but the date at which each picture referred to was painted, is given opposite its title in the index. As this little book does not aim to be a book of reference, no attempt is made to refer to all the pictures that Millais painted, but only to those that may be thought, for one reason or another, important.

It has already been observed that the Pre-Raphaelites, though setting out upon a return to nature, drew most of their early subjects from literature and history. Holman Hunt, throughout his career, concerned himself mainly with the past ; and though many of Millais' pictures, and among them

some of the very best, were taken from contemporary life, he continued to be indebted to literature. To Shakespeare he returned sixteen years after *Ophelia*, with *Rosalind and Celia*, where the two heroines of 'As you like It' are seen lying against a great beech-bole, exhausted with their wanderings through the forest of Arden, while Touchstone, modestly reclining at the farther side of the same bole, looks the very picture of whimsical, weary misery. There is clearly no manly spirit left under Rosalind's masculine apparel, and even if double negatives had not been permissible in Shakespeare's day, one feels that Celia's 'I pray you, bear with me, I cannot go no further,' would have been justified as a brief, emphatic declaration of the completeness of her exhaustion. Having followed Shakespeare into the realm of enchantment in *Ferdinand lured by Ariel*, and shown us in *Ophelia* the most tragic scene in 'Hamlet,' Millais here enters fully into the spirit of Shakespeare's comic muse. Technically the picture is one of those that mark the adoption of his later style. After it we have no more Shakespeare except a fancy-portrait, to which the name *Portia* was given, and which might pass for that sprightly lady scornfully rejecting Bassanio's excuses for giving the lawyer the ring, could we see traces of lurking merriment beneath the assumed severity. As

it is, she would do better for the lady whose shrewish temper gives the motive and the title to another comedy.

Another fancy-portrait serves well enough for the 'Olivia of the 'Vicar of Wakefield,' and yet another, *Diana Vernon*, brings us to Sir Walter Scott. The biography says that this picture is 'really a portrait of the Hon. Caroline Roche.' The face is the face of Caroline, and the dress is the dress of Diana, are we to say? Is this only *tableau*? Finally, of course, it is and can be nothing more. We wonder what part Millais played in the matter beyond pure portrait painting; if he sought to read into a beautiful face that might well have been Diana's the various possibilities of expression suggested by her story. Sadness, some touch of contemptuousness, well earned by her uncle and cousins, intelligence, a stately bearing, all these are and should be there. Perhaps there is not sufficient sign of quick wit and of capacity for indignation all the stronger because so well held under control in the act of expression.

To Scott's novels are due two of Millais' pictures of lovers, *Effie Deans* and *The Bride of Lammermoor*, both painted in 1877. Each is a scene in a tragedy of love, and the tragic note is clearly struck. Objection is often made to such pictures as these that they







EFIII DEANS

can only represent one moment in a story. But often the one moment tells all that need be known; just as a single sentence, Regan's 'Yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself,' lays bare the root of the tragedy of King Lear.

Though suggested by 'The Heart of Midlothian,' and from its title inevitably recalling the story of the shame of one sister and the stainless honour and unselfish courage of another, *Effie Deans* is not dependent upon the book for anything more than the suggestion. It is any girl, made unutterably miserable by the sense of shame, standing by the man whom she loves, yet who has brought her misery upon her. Her full consciousness of what her fall means is shown by the removal from her hair, by her own hand, of the ribbon that is the emblem of maidenhood. Her wretchedness is emphasised by the obvious poverty of the man's emotion. His concern is not deep enough for her to get from him the help she sorely needs. What to her is worse than death is to him but an unpleasant incident. The collie, with which she has been wont to romp and run, would sympathise if he could; but though type of a faithfulness that man often lacks, he has no standing here in face of grief that can only come to an order of being beyond comparison higher and deeper than his own.

*The Bride of Lammermoor* is not so independent of the story that suggested it as is *Effie Deans*. We must know the story if we are to understand why this man looks so stern as he supports the girl who clings helplessly to him. We might perhaps successfully detach the picture from its particular literary title by giving it some such title as *A Lover of a Hostile House*, and then we should make up our own story ; for it was essentially the same thing that brought woe to Edgar Ravenswood and Lucy Ashton as to Romeo and Juliet ; and Mercutio's dying curse, ' A plague o' both your houses,' again explains each tragedy in a sentence.

The background of both these pictures is treated with adequate if not Pre-Raphaelite detail. The handsome fern-fronds in the latter picture, with their exquisitely graceful curve and poise, evidently gave the painter pleasure in the drawing of them. The draughtsmanship and expression of the figures need no praise. *Effie Deans* is more than pictured : she is there ; and every inch of Ravenswood is instinct with a rigid pride that is not of the individual merely but of the race. The Ravenswood crest, we remember, was a black bull's head, with the motto ' I bide my time ! '

*Stella* and *Vanessa* are two pictures of the fancy-portrait order, suggested, the one by the lady whom

## THE LATER SUBJECT-PICTURES 107

Dean Swift is said privately to have married, and the other by the lady whose offer of marriage the Dean rejected. Technically they mark the full adoption of Millais' later manner; everywhere there is suggestion not transcript of fact; and there is fusion of colour into a rich, melting harmony, not the dry juxtaposition of tints that M. de la Sizeranne notes as characteristic of the pure Pre-Raphaelite practice. There is more than a faint illusion of actuality as we come before these pictures, due to the subtle rendering of the play of light and shade within the picture, which again is not Pre-Raphaelite, as also it is not to be found in the work of the Italian painters before Raphael's time. We may instance as a fine example of its early use Andrea del Sarto's *Portrait of a Sculptor* in the National Gallery. The subtlety of the painting gives also a subtlety to the facial expression. Stella's melancholy, for instance, does seem to be a shade that has come over her face, as a cloud-shadow steals over a landscape. We look expectantly to see if her reflections upon the letter she has just read will bring relief to her mind and gladness to her face; and as no change comes we fear lest the shade will deepen into gloom. Certainly Millais' later manner—which, let it be said, was by no means a discovery of his own, but one so long-established as to be accounted a familiar recipe of

the painter's craft—did render the faces in his subject-pictures less liable to a fixed photographic look.

The only picture in which Millais painted the female nude, and his only adventure also in the realm of mediæval chivalry, is *The Knight Errant*, where he who gives the title to the picture is releasing a lady whom bandits have stripped and bound to a tree. The knight's expression is finely conceived; so is that of the lady, visible although the head is turned away. It is possible to meet the objection that the lady's figure is merely a life-study by saying that such is exactly what Millais' realistic treatment of the subject requires. The picture is not of the order of Burne-Jones's poem-pictures; it seeks to show, as plainly as if we were actually witnessing the scene, how the knight, pure as a Galahad, anxiously seeks to aid the lady without her knowing, until she has donned the clothes that lie at her feet, to whom she both owes her freedom, and must trust for protection and safe-conduct.

A curious story told in connexion with this picture helps us to understand what seems an inappropriate facial expression in another picture. Millais is said to have first painted the lady with her head turned towards the spectator, but feeling that the spirit of utter modesty that he wished to express would be

## THE LATER SUBJECT-PICTURES 109

intensified were the head turned the other way, he cut out the first painting, and completed that part of the picture on a piece of canvas inserted in the place of that which was removed, this, in turn, being inserted in a larger canvas, and the head then served for *The Martyr of the Solway*, a picture now in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. The martyr of the Solway was Margaret Wilson, a girl of eighteen, who, along with an aged woman, Margaret MacLauchlan, was bound to a stake, and left to be drowned by the rising tide, because she would not abandon the Covenanting faith and attend episcopal service. *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum!* After she had seen her companion drowned, and had almost been drowned herself, Margaret was given a chance of life, but refused it, thus bravely going to her death. The girl's expression in the picture, showing distress, but giving no hint of exalted feeling, would fit exactly the lady of *The Knight Errant*, but is by no means that which we should expect in the religious enthusiast who died with a psalm upon her lips. It is interesting to turn from the oil painting to a black-and-white drawing of the same subject which Millais executed for 'Once a Week.' Here the girl is awaiting death with clasped hands, closed eyes, and lips that seem to breathe a prayer.

There is yet another picture that has religious persecution for its subject, *Mercy, St. Bartholomew's Day*, where a nun is endeavouring to hold back a man with a crucifix in his hat and the white badge on his arm, from obeying the behest of a monk who beckons to him to go forth and begin the work of death. It is one of the most melodramatic of Millais' pictures. Another historical picture that cannot be counted a success, either in the relation of the figures to the landscape, or in imaginative treatment of the subject, is *The Romans leaving Britain*. Nor in what is essentially a historical picture, *Greenwich Pensioners at the Tomb of Nelson*, did he achieve any considerable success. Two pictures in which subjects that are the property of no particular age are given a modern setting, and which rise to the dignity of historical pictures, *A Gambler's Wife* and *A Widow's Mite*, are among Millais' most impressive works of this kind. They are both pathetic, though in different ways. In the former a woman listlessly turns over the cards, which are the cause of the sorrow her face expresses; in the latter a widow, poorly clad and carrying a bandbox, puts her mite into the collecting-box of a hospital.

We have still another 'lovers' duet' to chronicle, *Yes!* the answer given to the question, 'Will you



THE WIDOW'S MITT









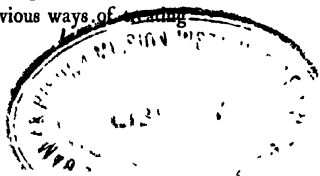
THE NORTH WEST PASSAGE

## THE LATER SUBJECT-PICTURES 111

wait?' asked by a handsome lover of his appropriately good-looking lady-love, as he is starting out upon a journey. The picture is extremely commonplace; the introduction of the gentleman's travelling gear may be necessary to the telling of the story, but one wishes that it had been otherwise. In *Yes or No?* we have a lady in doubt, and in *No!* a lady in no doubt, how a proposal shall be answered; and here we can part with lovers actual or potential.

One of the most nobly conceived and admirably designed and executed of Millais' subject-pictures is *The North-West Passage*. If one picture can atone for another, then this one fully atones for *Peace Concluded*. It could spare strength enough to make the other picture strong. It is one of those that help to make Millais' later work not incomparably lower in imagination and intellectual power than his early work.

It is the kind of picture that makes one wish to know how it took shape in the painter's mind. We can well understand that Arctic exploration would kindle Millais' enthusiasm, and that he would feel under inner compulsion to give expression to his enthusiasm through his art. But by what stages did he arrive at this finely imaginative treatment of the subject? Did it come to him as an inspiration, or had he first to reject other and more obvious ways of dealing



it, such as the Hon. John Collier's *Last Voyage of Henry Hudson*, which has a place along with Millais' picture in the National Gallery of British Art? We know of minor changes made as the picture progressed, as that two children turning a globe were at first in the right-hand corner of it, and knowing this we can fancy a weakness in the composition there, asking for the moving of the old man and his daughter a little farther to the right. But how did it come to Millais to think of expressing his own, and kindling other people's, enthusiasm for Arctic voyaging by showing an old sailor's deep enthusiasm for it? That is what we should like to know, and cannot know, but only guess at. And failure to guess it gives to the picture spontaneity and authority as of an actual and not merely an imagined event. This thing must have happened, and could have done so no otherwise than as we see it, in just such a room, with a bay-window overlooking the sea and provided with green Venetian blinds; just such furniture too, and the engraved portrait of Nelson, and the Union Jack.

The spirit of the higher patriotism informs the picture. There is a noble and there is an ignoble emulation of the nations; success in the latter, if it raises one, diminishes another; by success in the former all are profited. It is of such generous

emulation as this that this picture tells. Of course England ought to discover the North-West Passage; to do such things is part of her island, sea-faring mission. This is no Jingo spirit, but affirmation of the kind of thing that England must do, or, trying, nobly fail to do, under penalty of forfeiting the consciousness of being worthy of her own past. A great cloud of witnesses would condemn her if she lagged behind in the adventure that aims at adding to man's knowledge of the world in which he lives.

It was the tough old Cornish adventurer Trelawny, the friend of Byron and Shelley, a sea-captain who had fallen into the hands of Greek pirates, and married a pirate's daughter, whom Millais' wife, refusing to accept as final a first refusal made to her husband, at last persuaded to sit for the old sailor in this picture. He was the one man in all Millais' acquaintance who, he felt, could properly fill the part. As the old man's daughter reads to him a story of exploration, his soul is fired by what to her is probably matter of interest largely because of what it means to him. ~~He~~ He half listens to her reading, half ponders over the problems suggested by the map on the table behind her. She lays her hand upon his to calm the impatience with which he thinks of a thing to be accomplished, at which in earlier days he would have

made a brave attempt, but from which age now bars him out. The picture is thus an appeal from age to youth to take up its heritage of high endeavour.

The glass of grog by the old man's side, introduced after Trelawny's sittings were over, gave great offence to the old man, who was a strict teetotaler. Millais thought it essential to such a scene. Since the time the picture was painted grog has lost something of its old reputation as a defence against the rigour of Arctic cold. The vigorous painting of the picture is in full harmony with the character of the subject. The slight failure of stage management at the right side, if anything, concentrates attention on the reader and the listener, and natural though the fall of the girl's dress appears, it is none the less skilfully used, like her leaning towards the old man, to carry the eye past her to him, while yet she, whose reading gives all its meaning to his expression and gesture, holds a prominent position in the picture.

Exploration has become the ruling passion with this old man; he must think about it, plan it and in imagination take part in it, even when he can no longer actually do so. Another of Millais' subject-pictures has *The Ruling Passion* for a title. In it we see another enthusiast, an ornithologist, an invalid, propped up with cushions on a couch, holding in his

## THE LATER SUBJECT-PICTURES 115

hand a 'bird with brilliantly coloured plumage, while around him are a lady and four children. The subject was suggested by a visit to the famous ornithologist John Gould, and the old man was painted from T. Oldham Barlow, the engraver of so many of Millais' pictures, whose expressive portrait, by Millais, hangs in the Art Gallery of Oldham, his native town. Though painted in 1885, the picture, both for its successful treatment of an intensely human subject, and for its colour, greatly delighted Ruskin. 'I have never seen,' he said, 'any work of modern art with more delight and admiration than this'; and it may be added that he said of *The North-West Passage*: 'I have not seen this picture, but it must be a glorious one, judging merely from the coloured print'; to which appreciation he made the delightfully characteristic addendum: 'But as for Passages, either North-West or South-East, if England would mind her business at home it would be the better for her!'

Millais himself felt that the two younger children in *The Ruling Passion*, like those taken out of *The North-West Passage*, overcrowded the picture, and that their happy, bright expression weakened the pathetic note of the picture. For the rest, this was the kind of subject in which Millais' was most



thoroughly at home, and for painting the details of which his particular gift most fully qualified him.

It cannot be said that we have gained much from Millais' gleanings in the field of sacred art. But against this we must set the sacredness that he found and declared in the things that, by an antithesis that is surely if slowly being discredited, are called secular. There is more spiritual depth and intensity in the face of the Huguenot than in any of Millais' conventionally religious pictures, indeed, than in many a religious picture of high repute. That man is kindred, is brother to, *is*, one feels impelled to say, Watts's Good Samaritan. But Biblical and allied subjects Millais painted, it may be put, from the outside. It is not without significance in this connexion that he made no attempt to interpret mythological subjects. His interest lay in the life around him, and in such incidents met with in history, poetry or prose fiction, as daily experience enabled him sympathetically to interpret. Holman Hunt, on the other hand, tells us that, as a boy he was fired with a desire to go to Syria and paint scenes in the life of Christ; and that as a young man and artist his desire was a very strong to use his powers to make more tangible the history and teaching of Christ. Millais' *Christ in the House of His Parents*, was, we have seen, nothing more than a genre picture,

with elements in it that could be taken symbolically. Should higher, lower and all other criticism eventually make the gospel narratives incredible except as to an indefinite substratum of fact, Hunt's *Finding of Christ in the Temple* must ever be, like the story into which it gives us a new insight, a vivid illustration of the difference between the letter and the spirit : between that which, however venerable it may be through length of years, is out of all comparison lower than that of which it is but the imperfect, temporary expression. Another of Millais', if not exactly sacred, yet Biblical subjects, *The Return of the Dove to the Ark*, we have also seen not to be more than a genre picture.

*Victory, O Lord!* a picture representing Aaron and Hur holding up the hands of Moses so that Joshua may conquer in the battle with the Amalekites, is an honest attempt to render a subject that would be worthy of, and would tax the powers of, the greatest artist. Ruskin's comment on this picture, that it showed Millais not to understand either Moses or his law, might be instructive if we could have his own explanation of it, without which it remains a riddle. Physically exhausted, so that without his companions' support he would fall to the ground, Moses keenly watches the progress of the fight, his expression suggesting that he is expectant of the moment

when victory will plainly declare itself, yet fearful lest his and his companions' strength should not hold out. Aaron and Hur, whose attitudes show that a task light in itself has through long continuance become an almost intolerable strain, also watch the battle, without their leader's full confidence in its favourable issue. Aaron, indeed, looks as if he felt his strength failing; he grips the arm of Moses as with a fierce determination not to give way, and his wildly anxious eyes betray the extreme tension he is undergoing. Hur is so fascinated by the scene below him that it may well be he has almost become unconscious of the long-endured physical strain. The dust of the battle rises towards them, and an arrow has struck the ground close to their feet. The picture, which Millais had in hand for several years, cost him much thought and labour. The glowing harmony of deep-toned colour is in full keeping with the momentous character of the subject; while the modelling of the figures and the quality of the flesh-painting make the picture technically, in these respects, one of the finest of Millais' works. And it is the technical quality for which, finally, the picture most commends itself. In the treatment of the subject it does not rise above illustration. It does not illuminate the subject, making us feel that thus and no otherwise could the patriarchs have looked while the tides of

battle ebbed and flowed before their gaze, and that we know more about such men than we knew before.

*Jephthah* was another subject treated by Millais with much thought and care, but again without a convincing realisation of it. What terrible anguish should be expressed by the look of the father who says, and of the child who hears him say, knowing that the words are for her a sentence of death : ' Alas, my daughter ! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me ; for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.'

Millais' chief contribution to the illustration of the New Testament is a series of black-and-white drawings illustrating the Parables, to which further reference is made on a later page. They are adequate as illustration rather than as interpretation. They do not deepen our sense of the significance of the parables as do Watts's *Good Samaritan* and *For he had great Possessions*. From two of the designs, *The Lost Piece of Money* and *The Enemy Sowing Tares*, Millais executed oil paintings, the former of which was destroyed in an explosion in the house of Baron Marochetti. The 'enemy' in the latter is a repulsive creature with Shylockian features and expression ; he looks towards the light in his neighbour's house to make sure that he is doing his evil deed unseen. The landscape is dimly lighted by

a lurid sky. A hyena with gleaming eyes follows him stealthily. Vipers wriggle at his feet. The very atmosphere must be tainted with evil.

In *St. Stephen*, Millais made no attempt to interpret the martyrdom itself, to show the rapt expression of the saint, as with eyes that looked inwards not outwards he gazed steadfastly into the heaven that his accusers and judges could not see; or when, in the moment of death, he prayed for the forgiveness of those who in their ignorance thought they did right to kill him. All this the painter passed by to show the body of the saint lying on the ground, with the stones about it, and a halo around the head, shining out brightly above the cold dawn-light of an earthly day. But he showed more than this. The picture is no mere statement of the brutal, external facts of the martyr's death, with a conventional symbol added. Apart from the stones, and the gashed forehead, the face, the way the hands have fallen, and the relaxation of the entire frame, suggest sleep rather than death—pause not annihilation. This is not defeat but triumph, the triumph of the faith that speaks so quietly because so surely in the simple words of the Biblical narrative, 'he fell asleep.'

In the dim background are men and women, motionless, but looking intently at the body. We have to

choose between two explanations of them; and the one that should be the most authoritative is the least acceptable. In the biography of Millais they are said to be the retreating figures of the murderers. The other, and surely the true explanation—one might almost say whether Millais intended it or not—is that they are the saint's fellow-believers, approaching as soon as it is safe for them to do so, to carry away his body. The picture thus becomes an epic of persecution, of the mutual sorrows and the mutual joys, of the fears and the hopes, of the unconquerable faith, of all the little companies of men and women who, in a world that was not yet worthy of them, have been faithful unto death.

It is probable that Millais would have failed had he tried to represent the closing scene in the trial of Stephen, or the actual martyrdom; for he did not succeed in attempts to portray inspired enthusiasm—the phrase is used without the writer pledging himself to any definite interpretation of it. Both *A Forerunner* and *A Disciple*, though obviously earnest attempts to interpret, the former, a fiery enthusiasm, the latter, a calm, but none the less deep devotion, retain nevertheless so much suggestion of the carefully selected model, have so much of external, one might say, of irrelevant, attractiveness, that spiritual feeling is not conveyed free from alloy. All these three pictures were painted

near the end of Millais' life. A much earlier picture, with a kindred motive, the *Joan of Arc*, painted in 1865, even more perhaps than *The Forerunner* and *A Disciple* falls short of what the subject requires. It is quite obvious that this is a modern woman, and the incongruity of her being made to wear a suit of plate and chain-mail armour at once brings us to the *tableau* level. Thus Mr. Baldry says that Millais 'has missed the romantic side of his heroine, and has made her merely an ordinary young woman in fancy dress.' Block out the armour, and the face then expresses certainly little if anything more than sorrowful appeal. There is no trace of the fire burning within; this woman has seen and will see no visions—at least it would not occur to us to think of her doing so had the name of Joan of Arc not been given to her. What a pity that, instead of such feeble imaginings as these, Millais did not look for and portray fine types of the enthusiasm and devotion to be found in his own time, say, in the Salvation Army. It was this spirit he was trying to express. It is, under varying forms, an eternal spirit. He could have seen and studied its authentic working. In such a task he might have succeeded. These half-successes that are failures show that in seeking to imagine inspired enthusiasm he had mistaken his powers.

## (THE LATER SUBJECT-PICTURES 123

*Speak! Speak!* one of the pictures of Millais' last years in which, as he himself said, he came back to the solemn subjects of his early years, takes us on to ground where angels might fear to tread. According to the biography, the man is a young Roman, who, after reading through the night the letters of his lost love, sees, at dawn, the curtains of his bed parted, and, standing before him, in spirit or in truth, the lady herself, decked as on her bridal night, and gazing upon him with sad but loving eyes.' According to this, the alternatives to the man's hope and fear are not whether the figure be indeed the spiritual form of his love or only a creation of his own fancy, but whether it be an actual appearance of her spirit soon to fade away, or the very giving of her back to him from the dead. Mr. Spielmann's account of a conversation with Millais about the picture confirms this interpretation, though he himself does not appear to understand it thus. He says that he remarked to Millais that he could not tell whether the luminous apparition were a spirit or a woman, and that Millais was pleased and replied that he did not know either nor did the man in the picture. Yet Mr. Spielmann says that the man does not know whether what appears to him be, not the spirit or the actual bodily presence of his love, but she herself or the creation of his own tortured imagination.



As each of the three alternatives is conceivable, we may perhaps admit them all. The picture sets before us one of the most harrowing of human experiences, an awfully painful uncertainty, and it leaves the issue completely open. The artist not only gives us no clue, he bars out the idea of his giving us a clue, to whether he thinks what we may call a spiritualistic interpretation of such an experience to be a possible one. It is not for us to discuss such things here. The only thing further that we are inclined to say about the picture is that the man's gesture is too sensational, that the picture would have struck a deeper, more solemn because quieter note, had his facial expression rather than the agonised gesture been emphasised. In such a theme the very suspicion of melodrama should be avoided, and it is not avoided here.

Millais' tendency to revert to solemn subjects, indeed to choose more solemn subjects than ever before, as advancing years brought him inevitably nearer to death, receives perhaps its most obvious illustration in *Time the Reaper*, painted in 1895. It is as if he were telling all whom he had sought to please and teach by his art, that the time during which he could continue to do so must be very short. Time, an aged man, with scythe and hour-glass, enters the House of Life. Such a picture by Millais was sure to be dignified ; it

was not so sure to be deeply impressive, to awaken the desired, solemn mood, by the solemnity of the figure itself—as in Watts's *Love and Death*. If we are moved by this picture, it is because its title and its symbolism, not its inherent impressiveness, have led us to meditate on man's mortality.

This is a convenient point at which briefly to refer to Millais' work in black-and-white, most of which consisted of figure-subjects.

We have seen him as a child astonishing the French officers at Dinan by his figure-sketching; and this facility was cultivated and markedly developed. It is interesting to compare his rapid sketches, the kind of thing that is done in letters and on scraps of paper, with similar sketches by Holman Hunt. While those of Millais are full of movement and life, those of Hunt are laboured and stiff; and there is the same difference between the figures in their respective paintings. We have a clue in this to the essential difference in the capacity of the two men that explains why Hunt, in his own words, retained the restrained handling of an experimentalist, while Millais, as we have seen, adopted a much broader, more suggestive style.

His important work in this kind began in 1857, with the illustrations in Moxon's famous edition of Tennyson's poems, in which Holman Hunt, Rossetti

and others took part. This was just near the end of his Pre-Raphaelite period, but before his style had definitely changed, and his black-and-white work is also Pre-Raphaelite in character, as, for example, in the delightful illustration to the 'St. Agnes' Eve,' where he keeps close to the words of the poem by showing the girl-saint's breath drifting upwards; and her hands, face and hair are carefully drawn. Her dress, it is interesting to note also, falls in a few simple folds like that of the girls in *The Return of the Dove to the Ark*. His other drawings for the book also have a firmness of outline, and simple, careful rendering of the light and shade entirely in keeping with his work in colour at the same period. His *Mariana*; the poplars bending before the gale, and the turret dark against the moonlight, in *The Sisters*; the *Edward Gray*; the *Locksley Hall*, show him finely responsive to the mood of each poem; while *The Death of the Old Year*, if it do not illustrate any particular passage in the poem, expresses its spirit, and reminds us in its general manner, if not in the detail of the drawing, of Rethel's impressive simplicity. In the same year Millais began the series of illustrations of the Parables already mentioned, twelve of which appeared in 'Good Words.' By 1863 he had completed twenty of them, and they were published in book-form. Between 1857 and

1863 Millais had changed his style, and these drawings give evidence of the change, the earlier ones being definite and precise, the later ones relying much more upon suggestive treatment. Millais never approached Impressionism, never subordinated character and significance to subtle rendering of light and atmosphere. He would rather have anticipated Post-Impressionism had he sacrificed good drawing and beauty in his search for the significant. But he did not; and we have no label for him unless we call him a realist.

His contributions to the art of illustration are too numerous for detailed consideration here. Some of his most important work appeared in 'Cornhill,' 'Good Words' and 'Once a Week'; but there were contributions to numerous other publications. Those who were children when or soon after these drawings of Millais' were appearing may recollect, as does the present writer, being differently impressed by them than by the work of other contributors. One used to look in awe at such things as *The Monk* and *The Plague at Elliant*, and with delight at *Dolly*, vaguely wondering how such scratchy, unfinished things could, none the less, tell their story so well.

Among the novels illustrated by Millais were Anthony Trollope's 'Framley Parsonage,' 'Orley Farm,' 'Small House at Allington,' and 'Phineas

Finn,' and Thackeray's 'Barry Lyndon.' He also contributed illustrations to William Black's 'Macleod of Dare,' and to stories by Harriet Martineau and Miss Mulock. He illustrated many poems besides those of Tennyson; and Christina Rossetti and George Meredith are among those whose work he interpreted.

These drawings in black-and-white are marked by a very varied use of his materials, passing from a careful finish to what is little more than a mere hint, but always a significant one, seizing on the essential thing to be recorded. From a firm outline, as in the Tennyson illustrations and the earlier Parables, we pass, in the illustrations to 'Barry Lyndon,' to line broken into dots, thus greatly increasing the sense of atmosphere and of movement.

From another point of view these drawings make us regret that Millais' work as a painter ran so often in a conventional groove. They show so great capacity for understanding and sympathising with all sorts and conditions of life, from the air of solid satisfaction in the board-room, through the genteel poverty of the parson's family, to the large untidiness of the farm-kitchen, to take only three examples. We are facing real life in *Farmer Chell's Kitchen*; what mere make-believe is the painting *New-laid Eggs*, where a young lady, one of the painter's daughters in fact, in

a fashionable gown, is, not collecting eggs as people collect them who have it to do, but looking away to a spectator from something that is only a pretence.

Millais had a just appreciation of the importance of work in black-and-white, so much so that he tried, though in vain, to get it recognised as a sufficient qualification for academic honours. He was far from being alone in making considerable use of it as a means of expression. Both Holman Hunt and Rossetti did so, if not to the same extent; while the mere names of Leighton, Sandys, Fred Walker, Poynter, Pinwell, Richard Doyle, Leech, Charles Keene, Du Maurier, suggest to us how much poorer we should have been but for the work of a large company of men, among whom they were some of the chief, who through drawings made for reproduction either expressed their own ideas or sought to interpret those of others.

Here we may also conveniently mention incidentally that Millais showed himself a sympathetic interpreter of animal life; as, for example, in the dogs in *The Order of Release* and *Effie Deans*, and in the kitten in *A Flood*. Here, as in other cases, we find ourselves wishing that it had fallen to him to do systematically what he only did occasionally and incidentally.

## VII

### *CHILD-PICTURES*

THE pictures by Millais in which children play the sole or the chief part form a considerable portion of his life-work. If we were to attribute this to the popularity of child-pictures, we should still have to admit that Millais could not have painted them so that they would find acceptance unless he had been fond of children. And not only the number of the pictures, but incidents narrated in his biography, show that this was the case. A landscape painter, whom Millais did not know, has told me that he was once walking along the street in London with his little girl, when Millais met them, stopped, looked at the girl, who was a very winsome and beautiful child, said abruptly, 'She ought to be painted,' and, without another word, passed on.

If we asked now whether Millais had a decided preference as between boys and girls, and were we to







THE PRINCES IN THE TOWER

judge by numbers painted, we should have to conclude that his preference was for girls; unless we could think that he yielded his own partiality in deference to a general popularity of girls. Reynolds' children that I call to mind were nearly all girls. Gainsborough's outstanding picture of youth is a boy, needless to add, *The Blue Boy*, whom we treasure along with such young heroes, pictured for us in another art, as Richard Feverel and Crossjay Patterne. Raeburn understood the boy, witness the two Paterson brothers, both merry, but one of them a perfect imp of mischief. And though, like the male sex in the living human race as a whole, Millais' boys are in a minority, they are by no means a negligible quantity. The boy, the squire's son, in *The Woodman's Daughter*, has already been appreciated. In *The Rescue*, the boy, if I do not misread his expression, has forgotten, or does not realise, the danger which is as yet barely over, and is taking an awesome yet intense interest, as a boy would, in the lurid spectacle above him, whereas the girl, and the younger child, simply wish to be safe in their mother's arms. Perhaps the most widely popular of Millais' boy-pictures is *The Princes in the Tower*, but this is more because of its pathetic interest, so soon to become tragedy, than for its showing insight into boy-nature. Mr. Spielmann says that the originals of the princes were

a brother and sister whom Millais had seen dressed like this in a *tableau vivant*. This is not substantiated by the biography; but the mention of *tableaux* suggests one test to which we can put Millais' subject-pictures, not of children alone: how far could they be successfully reproduced in *tableau*, by ordinary people, not by experienced actors, with little loss in truth and intensity of expression? Millais often failed to rise much, if anything, above this level. It is so with *The Princess*. The boys are standing on a step of one of the newel-staircases in the Tower. The shadow of an armed man on the wall above them suggests the noise that has intensified the fear that doubtless now never leaves them. The younger one clings to the elder as if for protection, thus deepening the pathos—for what protection can be given? The elder one, the Prince of Wales, who perhaps more fully realises the grounds for fear, shows by his anxiously searching glance and trembling lips how great his fear is. The subject is certainly pathetically treated. No one could fail to be moved by the picture. Still one feels that there is something not quite right. The boys are so conventionally good-looking as to suggest that they have been chosen for the part. Attitude and expression are not above suspicion of being studied. We are moved, but by what is at least near to the level of *tableau*.





THE FATHER OF THE FATHERS

About *The Boyhood of Raleigh*, on the other hand, there is no suspicion of *tableau*. It does not occur to us to doubt that we are the witnesses of a scene in the early life of the great adventurer. The two boys—they were two of Millais' sons—are good-looking enough, but they are not 'pretty' boys. Their attitudes are natural, Walter seated on the ground with his hands clasped round his knees, his brother with his hands under his chin. By a low sea-wall—the actual scene was on the Devonshire coast—over which appear a headland and the sea blue beneath a clear summer sky, the boys are listening to the tales of a swarthy Genoese sailor, and doubtless accepting truth and untruth without discrimination. Walter is not looking at the narrator, who, as if to verify his story, points towards the distant Spanish main where his wondrous adventures have happened. The boy who, when he comes to manhood, is to have his full share of derring do, might even now be looking into his own future—the more so because there is a touch of melancholy in his expression. His brother, interested evidently, but not ~~as~~ one who hopes to see and do such marvels himself, looks straight at the speaker. Painted in 1870, the picture is yet almost Pre-Raphaelite in its detail of water-worn stones, boy-ship, rusty anchor, brilliantly coloured shell, tropical birds, and flowers. All this

detail, and the rich variety of colour, glowing in the hot sunshine, are in keeping with, we might say necessary to, the romantic character of the subject.

The most widely known of Millais' boy-pictures is, needless to say, *Bubbles*. It was by no fault of the artist that it was used for advertising purposes. This happened after it had ceased to be his property, and despite his desire to prevent it. The boy is Millais' grandson, Willie James, whom he actually saw blowing bubbles and thought what a pretty picture he would make. And he does make a pretty picture, in his green velvet suit, and large, frilled collar ; not perhaps exactly the costume in which an economical mother would let a small boy blow bubbles, a detail that may or may not be held to be a defect of over-prettiness. The expression of the boy, as he looks up at the beautiful, perishable globe, entranced by its lovely hues, yet knowing from experience how soon it will break into a soapy sputter, has been admirably caught. We might follow the example of the Archbishop's moralising over the heard, and the unheard sermon, and read here the lesson that all is vanity. It has been maintained that Messrs. Pears' clever use of this picture has helped to raise the standard of pictorial advertisement. One cannot but think that there are pictures to which such

use would be a degradation, and that if this be one of them, it is the boy's expression that makes it so.

The two sexes are brought together under romantic circumstances in *An Idyll, 1745*; where by a stream-side, on the outskirts of a military camp, three Scotch lassies are gazing in wonderment at a drummer-boy who, in all his glory of scarlet and white and gold is playing his life for their entertainment. But it is he himself, rather than his music, or his uniform rather than either himself or his music, that has aroused and sustains their admiration. One of the three looks in sheer amazement at the heraldic figures on his tall grenadier's hat. He himself is clearly conscious, and very agreeably conscious, of the sensation he is causing; and his companion, apparently an officer's boy, is smiling, it would be truer to say broadly grinning, at the rapt wonder of the girls. The drama here is so amusing that we are ready to forgive the faulty construction of the picture, the central part of which is little more than an empty space. Painted in 1884, this picture shows Millais, in his brother's phrase, 'slurring over' the woodland beauty upon which in earlier years he would have lingered lovingly. Still, with the arrival of such a gorgeous work of art as this drummer-boy, nature might be supposed willingly to consent to her own subordination.



Several of Millais' deepest interpretations of girl-nature have already been considered. Few if any of the girl-pictures now to be mentioned belong to the same order of art as *Autumn Leaves* and *The Blind Girl*, both of which are, as Madox Brown said of the latter, religious pictures, and that in a deeper sense than is often true of pictures of conventional religious subjects. For the most part we shall find ourselves now looking at *tableaux*—excellent *tableaux*, but still only that. Such things are a perfectly legitimate form of amusement; in their higher forms, of instruction, of even more than instruction; but it is not the higher forms that, oftener than not, we now get from Millais. We get the trivial things of which Holman Hunt spoke, some of them, as he said, done simply to meet the vulgar demand, however excellent they may be in workmanship. In his haste to meet the demand, Millais could fail egregiously to enter into the spirit of fairy-story or song. One thinks, in comparison with things he did, of the wonder-world into which Burne-Jones takes us in such a series of pictures as *The Briar Rose*. What would the same painter have made of Cinderella? What did Millais make of her? Merely the occasion for a fancy-portrait of a supercilious-looking girl. This girl, though she is very beautiful, is no Cinderella. She looks more like one of the wicked.

sisters playing the part. To turn to Burne-Jones again, the story of King Cophetua and the Beggar-maid is closely akin to that of Cinderella; and what a world of difference divides this Cinderella from Burne-Jones's beggar-maid! Millais' picture is little if anything above common, pantomime level.

The girl who sat for *Cinderella*, Miss Beatrice Buckstone, the granddaughter of the comedian, J. B. Buckstone, and an actress herself, sat also for *Sweetest Eyes Were Ever Seen* and *Caller Herrin*. Something more than a fancy-portrait of even an exceptionally pretty child is needed to interpret Mrs. Browning's poem, 'Catarina to Camoens.' And what could be more trivial than to paint the same pretty girl, seated on a bank under trees, near the sea, with her hair over her shoulders, and a dreamy look, and to put by her side a basket with herrings in it, and label the picture *Caller Herrin*? Few of Ruskin's utterances are more perplexing than the one on this picture in the second of his 'Art of England' lectures: 'In that most noble picture by Millais, which probably most of you saw last autumn in London, the *Caller Herrin* picture, which as a piece of art, I should myself put highest of all yet produced by the Pre-Raphaelite school,—in that most noble picture, I say, the herrings were painted just as well as the girl and

the master was not the least afraid that, for all he could do to them, you would look at the herrings first.' But the picture is not Pre-Raphaelite in treatment; and who but a cat, a fishmonger intent on business, or someone mad with hunger, would look at a couple of herrings in preference to a pretty face? Yet there seems to be a suggestion that Millais might be putting the herrings into competition with the face. The passage is, to me, an insoluble conundrum.

*A Waif*, again, is pure *tableau*: a well-nourished child, dressed in rags, and obviously posed for picture or photograph. One turns with relief from the make-believe to the delightful basket of flowers.

Some of these child-pictures have been put to the test, unanswerable in its way, of what, in another art, is known as box-office criticism: *Cherry Ripe*, for example, which, when it was reproduced as a 'Graphic' coloured plate, sold in a few days a 600,000 edition, and brought to the office a total demand of nearly a million. It is almost impossible not to bow down to such figures as these, or rather to the picture that called them into being. Even to hesitate seems like posing as a superior person. But let us not forget that Millais himself, according to Holman Hunt, spoke rather contemptuously of this kind of thing: 'There is a fashion going now for little girls in mob-caps!' . If



CHERRY KIP



*The Eve of St. Agnes*, Val Prinsep's 'genius bit,' could have been published as a 'Graphic' coloured plate, there would have been no million people anxious to have it; otherwise its happy possessor's estimate of public taste must have been hopelessly wrong. No, numbers are not the ultimate test; and we are at liberty to decide for ourselves about *Cherry Ripe*. The little lady, Miss Edie Ramage, appeared at the 'Graphic' fancy-dress ball in the character of Reynolds' *Penelope Boothby*, and was so much admired that she was taken to Millais' studio to be painted by him. She was quite the confident little person she looks in the picture, making up, we are told, in the painter's studio, for her mother's nervousness. There is a delightful touch of coquetry about the eyes and the turn of the mouth. Millais must have had little to do beyond setting down what was before him, with the exception of making flowers and leaves seem to group themselves admiringly round this dainty little human flower. That is to say, what Millais did in this picture was little more than to record what an extremely pretty little child looked like, daintily dressed, at a fancy-dress ball. No other painter could have done it so well, could have expressed all there was to express. But, at the finish, it was record, not insight, not interpretation. It was worth doing. . Once in a way it

may have been worth Millais' doing. But he almost poured out these things : *Little Mrs. Gamp*, *Pomona*—the frock, mob-cap and mittens of *Cherry Ripe* again—*Little Miss Muffett*, *The Captive*—obviously a girl dressed in character and standing with a tray of fruit in her hand while she is painted—*Dropped from the Nest*, a little girl sorrowful over a fallen fledgling, akin to which is *The Empty Cage*. After all these it is refreshing to come to the simple naturalness of the child of *The Little Speedwell's Darling Blue*, seated on the ground and looking at the flowers she has been gathering. It is as if the little girl of Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Age of Innocence* had forgotten how innocent she was, and had taken to being a real child, knowing nothing of innocence or the lack of it, but very much liking flowers, a very innocent and wholesome pleasure.

Ought what has been said about Reynolds' and Millais' painting of babies to be modified when we have looked at the infant in the cradle in *A Flood*? I think that Reynolds still comes first. None the less, this is very good baby. It is even better cat. The little black rascal—it was a veritable household terror—evinces the feline hereditary fear of drowning with a mew so well suggested that we can almost hear it. May we take it that Millais would test the sea-going qualities of the old-fashioned wooden, canopied cradle?



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A-SOUVENIR OF VIITASQUEZ

Without having done so one would expect it to turn turtle. The cat does not seem to trust it. Let us hope the father will soon get his punt alongside and the mother rescue the child from its strange craft. Meanwhile it is happy watching birds and raindrops in the tree-branches. Without being exactly a picture, this is a cleverly painted bit of pictorial storytelling, and is exceedingly popular.

- Were these child-pictures being taken in order of date, or of merit, we should have reached *A Souvenir of Velasquez* before now. Millais never went to Spain. He received an invitation from the Queen of Spain to visit her at Madrid, but did not accept it. He feared that Spain and its people, with their colour and picturesqueness, might come in between him and a sympathetic treatment of English subjects. But he had a profound admiration for the art of Velasquez, and longed to see his works at Madrid. This picture is a tribute to Velasquez; and it is significant that it is one of those which mark the exchange of his Pre-Raphaelite manner for the broad suggestiveness that brought him nearer to the great Spanish master. This little lady, with her hair loosely falling into the shape to which the hair of Velasquez' ladies and children was fixed, and with a further suggestion in her frock, has a touch of pride and of latent fire that establishes

a deeper living bond between her and those who sat to Velasquez.

Lastly, of the numerous child-pictures, we must not overlook the *Princess Elizabeth in Prison at St. James's*, in subject a companion picture to *The Princess in the Tower*, both of them bringing home to us how the march of great events has often trampled out the happiness and even the lives of children. This winsome little maiden, sadly smiling, as she thinks how best she can word her appeal to the Parliamentary Commissioners that she may retain her own attendants and go to her sister, the Princess of Orange, and pictures the happiness for which she can hardly dare to hope, makes us lose ourselves and the present, go back into the past, and seem actually to see this suffering child of the unhappy Stuart race.

We need not try to exhaust the list of all the pictures of children that Millais painted. Even the most artificial of them are always charming. The most natural, those that tell most truly the tale of childish happiness and childish sorrow, can hardly be surpassed.

## VIII

### *PORTRAITURE*

It would have been difficult to foresee, in the days of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, that Millais would become the most popular portrait painter of his time. A clairvoyant foretelling it would have lost credence and custom. Not but that there was manifest the capacity to paint portraits. But those that appear in the early subject-pictures are not of the kind that bring carriages to studio doors. And, beyond this, Millais, at that time, seemed destined for other work than such as would bring him into comparison with the great portrait painters of the eighteenth century. When we consider that Holman Hunt and Rossetti pursued, each of them, to the end of his life, the path in art upon which he had set out ; when we ask ourselves the question, and at once dismiss it with a negative, if it were possible to think of either of them becoming a popular portrait painter ; and yet we know

of the men. They are interpretations, not necessarily 'striking likenesses.'

There must, of course, be some measure of interpretation in every portrait that is not the mere bald mechanical reproduction of features. Even a photographer may choose an attitude, a lighting of the face, an expression, that will make his photograph a revelation of character. There are photographers who may be called great. And this gives us a phrase that will help us to estimate Millais' achievement as a portrait painter: his portraits do for us what is done by great photography. We think—in many instances, it may be, we know—that did we see the originals of them this is exactly how they would look—and how their clothes would look. We are very far from confidently thinking this about Watts's portraits, which seem as if the painter might have summoned up the spirit of the man to aid him in painting a portrait from memory. Millais' portraits tell us exactly what the men looked like when they came to his studio by arrangement. Many of them look as if they knew they were being 'taken.' Sir John Hare, and Sir Henry Irving, for example, stand in a stiff, set attitude, and have the air of being under observation.

The German writer, Herr Meier-Graeffe, says that the English school of painting is portrait-ridden,

and uses even of Reynolds, Gainsborough and Romney a phrase he borrows from Hogarth, who said that he did not wish to become a mere 'portrait manufacturer.' Such a phrase would be more fitly applied to Vandyck's portrait painting, brilliant though it was, than to the work, less great in some ways, of the Englishmen ; and it is certainly too strong to be applied to Millais except in a general sense. But it is well to have our eyes open to the mischief that fashionable patronage may work upon an artist. Millais did not get down to the level of painting people not as they were but as they would like to think themselves, to quote a recent description of much Royal Academy portraiture. That is distinctly manufacture. If a Millais portrait can at once be recognised as such it is on account of the handling, and of the force and vividness of the presentation, not because his sitters all approximate to a common type. There is no lack of individuality. Millais' art, all the way through, was too positive, too realistic, objective—other adjectives of similar meaning are in the dictionary—for him subconsciously to reduce his sitters to a greatest common measure. Yet he did 'turn out' portraits in very considerable number, the carriages did bring sitters to his great West End house ; he was doing a big, fashionable business, the portraits



had to appear, and to assert themselves sufficiently on the Academy walls. They have a professional look ; and professional art often lacks something that even the amateur can give : sympathy and freshness of feeling. Millais knew well how to mark off his sitters one from another, to give the outward signs of their diverse qualities ; but while these things are seen and presented, the portraits rarely have that highest quality of seeming to exhale the very spirit, so that one feels not merely to be in the presence of, looking at and learning much about a person, but to be subtly influenced by him—that a virtue comes out from him to us, that we are in communion with him. We are informed by a Millais portrait ; we are moved, we are inspired, by a Watts portrait.

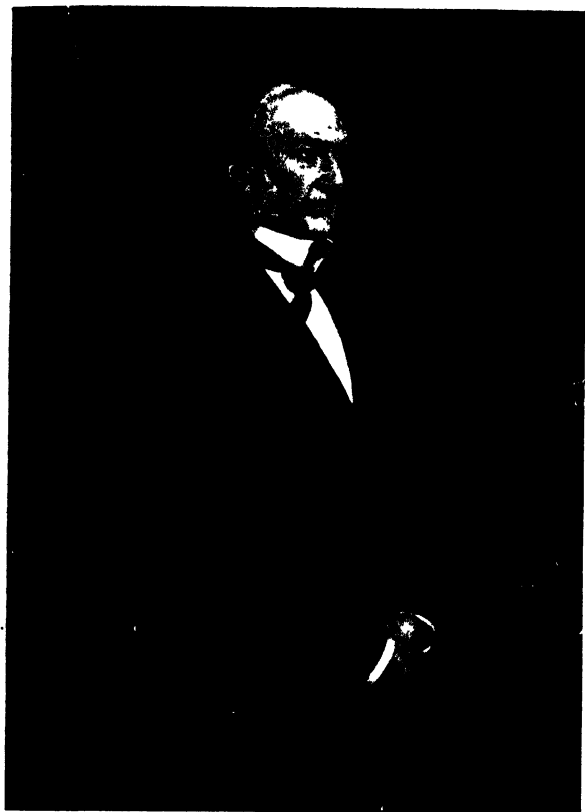
It is well to have both kinds of portraiture. Our debt to a Millais is a great one, although it is different from, and in final analysis less than, that which we owe to a Watts. He always treated his sitters with respect ; he thought and told the best he could about them. He was never cynical, never malicious. There are portrait painters who, like palmists, may make known to those who go to them unsuspected or half-suspected weaknesses ; most of those who sat to Millais might wish always to be at the level of, not what he read into them, but what he saw in them.

'Punch' once drew a sharp line of division between portraits when he made a young lady, who was being shown the treasures of a mansion, ask the great dame who was doing the honours, if the portraits on the walls were those of people of importance or only family portraits! The great lady's look of indignant bewilderment could not rob the question of its sting. How many thousands of portraits have the manufacturers turned out that, after a few years, neither in themselves as art, nor on account of the people they represented, had the slightest interest for anybody! What would many of the people who sat to Reynolds, Gainsborough, Romney, Raeburn and the rest have said, had they been told that as the years went by to have done so would come to be their chief, if not their only ground of distinction? A list of portraits by Watts, as compared with one of those by Millais, shows a much larger proportion of portraits of men who will be longer than the vast majority of their fellows in reaching that goal of oblivion to which Mr. Watts-Dunton once told Tennyson they were both going, while he himself would arrive there first! At the same time we get from Millais certain types that we do not get from Watts, Sir Henry Thompson and Sir Richard Quain, for example. And Watts has left us no Sir John Astley! Watts's list of artists, men of letters

and philosophers is much longer than that of Millais ; whose portrait of J. C. Hook, R.A., however, is one of the most deeply sympathetic of his works, painted, if the phrase may be allowed, from the inside.

There is a characteristic difference between the portraits by Watts and Millais of Thomas Carlyle ; the former sees him sadly introspective ; the latter sees him in a moment of irritation, which we may interpret as aroused by some private grievance, or by some special manifestation of the folly of mankind.

Both of them were busy among statesmen and diplomatists, Millais, I think, claiming more of the former. Watts painted Gladstone as early as 1865, before hard fighting of many kinds had given to his face its ardent warrior expression. He himself said that it was the earliest portrait of Gladstone of any pretension. The first of Millais' three portraits of Gladstone came years later, in 1879, painted for the Duke of Westminster, who turned it face to the wall when Gladstone declared for Home Rule, and then sold it to Sir Charles Tennant, by whose gift it became the property of the nation. In it Gladstone looks an inspired enthusiast ; it is said that while it was being painted, in the Bulgarian atrocity days, he was thinking what a terrible sin it would be if England went to war on behalf of the Turks. In 1885 came



• Tinfstone

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE



the portrait of Gladstone in his Doctor's robes, but though he was a man of much learning, these robes only signified an honorary degree : he was first and foremost a man of affairs ; such an expression as this could hardly have been made possible by essays on the 'Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture' or Homer's authorship of the Homeric poems. There is not a little of Michelangelesque *terribilità* in this face ; or to go still further back, we think of the war-horse pawing the valley and scenting the battle from afar.

How different is the type shown by the portraits the two artists painted of Lord Salisbury, of which Millais' is the more individual presentment of the man. We may liken Gladstone to the adventurous discoverer, voyaging on perilous seas, and Lord Salisbury to the captain of a great ocean steamship carefully navigating his vessel along a well-known, fully charted course. This is the man who, when such a wild new proposal was made as that English villages should have their own councils, exclaimed, 'Give them a council, give them a circus!' Things were to remain, if not as they were in the beginning, at least as they had been time whereof the memory of the Cecils ran not to the contrary. It was a fine old English point of view ; but the villages have their councils now for all that, and they are showing themselves to be good schools for

learning self-government and self-control ; and many of them are Conservative enough almost to satisfy Lord Salisbury. To Bismarck, this studious English gentleman, who was also a statesman, for all his massive head and stolid expression, was a lath painted to look like iron ; but he thought that a certain little Jew, whom we know as Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, meant business. This man, also, Millais painted, near to the end of his days, when disease was marking him for death ; but it is not enthusiasm that the face has lost, nor is there here mere stolidity, but a cool calculation of certain ends within reach, with the gaining of which nothing is to interfere. Are not the shades of Bismarck and Beaconsfield still walking the earth ?

Another statesman whose portrait Millais painted was John Bright, a typical Englishman in build, in head and in cast of features. One can understand that in this Quaker who was so strenuous a fighter for peace, Millais would appreciate a courage and resolution akin to his own. The fighting quality is emphasised, not only in what Carlyle called the pugnacious nose, but in the fearless eyes and determined set of the mouth ; while the massive head tells us that this will be no merely truculent, unreflecting fighter.

Another interesting comparison may be made

between two Watts and Millais portraits: the Cardinal Manning of the former and the Cardinal Newman of the latter. There is more of the fire of life left in the Manning than in the Newman; the latter was eighty years of age when the portrait was painted. Mr. Spielmann says that the character does not seem strong or marked enough for the man who wrote '*Apologia pro Vitâ Meâ*.' Is it not rather the lover of music, and the author of '*The Dream of Gerontius*,' and '*Lead, Kindly Light*' that the portrait fails to suggest, but who has been given by hands less skilful yet more subtly guided by a fuller sympathy? One hardly thinks of Millais as the man to interpret Newman. Both this picture and Watts's Manning are notable for their skilful management of the colour of the rich ecclesiastical dress, the latter dealing more successfully with the texture, particularly of the lace.

Another ecclesiastical portrait by Millais is that of Dr. Fraser, Bishop of Manchester, now in the municipal art gallery of that city. Known and loved as 'the bishop of all denominations,' Dr. Fraser, nevertheless, found it impossible to please altogether even a single one of the parties within his own church, and at the time this portrait was painted, he was harassed and depressed by the contentions to which his



administration gave rise. The portrait shows this ; and is a pathetic, human document.

Leaving Millais' portraits of men, after considering those of a few of the most famous of his sitters, we turn to his portraits of women, of which there is a much larger number than of portraits of men. We may find the explanation of this both in what we have called the more professional character of Millais' work, and also in the success with which, without as a rule letting native womanliness fall into the second place, he gave to his portraits of women the air of people who could move easily, yet consciously, in a little social world of their own that fixes a great gulf between itself and humanity at large. Let it be said that there are many such worlds, not only one or two confined to what are called the upper classes ; though it was in these higher worlds that Millais' women moved. One of his technical triumphs in portraiture, the *Mrs. Bischoffsheim*, is a case in which what the woman has, very much more than what she is, distinguishes her from many other women not possessing as much. As a technical accomplishment, in its skilful rendering of flesh-tones, of a most elaborate dress, and of jewels, of a rich background, and of the attitude and expression of a woman who is well aware of the virtue of all these things, the picture is a masterpiece.





THE DUCHESS OF WESTMINSTER

It created a great sensation when it was exhibited in Paris in 1878. In the portrait of the Duchess of Westminster, on the other hand, essential womanliness outweighs everything else. When this was said once in public, an auditor afterwards went to the speaker and thanked him for saying it, explaining that he had been a tenant on the Westminster estate, and that what had been said was exactly what the tenants felt about the Duchess. The portrait, it may be noted, was presented by the tenantry to Earl Grosvenor on his coming of age.

As one of Millais' child-pictures was a reminiscence of Velasquez, so one of his pictures of women, *Hearts are Trumps*, would not have been painted, at least as we know it, but for Sir Joshua Reynolds' *The Ladies Waldegrave*. Reynolds' three charming damsels are too early in date to be found in the pages of Jane Austen, but they belong to the same race as her heroines; while Millais' ladies might have been taken from, or been taken by, George Meredith. Marked differences of temperament are shown between the individuals of each trio, and we find ourselves thinking how each of them would behave, how she would look, what say and do, under various circumstances. There ought to be a romance based on each picture, with the gentlemen chosen in the one case from among Reynolds', in the other from among

Millais', masculine sitters; but for the counterpart of Reynolds' *Two Gentlemen*, should we not have to go to Millais' subject-pictures?

Millais' picture is a fine technical performance. All the detail was executed by his own hand—he even designed the dresses—whereas the detail of Reynolds' picture was left to a journeyman. Sir Walter Armstrong says of the picture: 'There is a bravura in the execution, and a union of respect for the minutest vagaries of fashion with breadth of hand and unity of result, which has never been excelled since the days of Don Diego Velasquez.'

We might run on through these portraits, and speak of the fine, challenging expression and carriage of the *Mrs. Jopling*, the charm, like that of the Duchess of Westminster, of the *Mrs. Stibbard*, the natural grace and sweetness of the *Mrs. Perugini*. It must be enough to have hinted how Millais showed himself, in his portraits both of men and of women, to have the gift, which Watts saw and admired in him, of clearly defined individual characterisation.

One more portrait has to be mentioned, one of the finest, *The Yeoman of the Guard*, taken apart from the others because it differs in one important particular from those already considered: the sitter was one who could not afford to pay Millais for painting the por-



A WOMAN OF THE CLOTH



trait. It is a pity that Millais had not more such sitters. We could have spared a large number of the ladies and gentlemen for some plain men and women ; just as our earlier art gave us far too few portraits like Hogarth's *Shrimp-Girl* and Gainsborough's *Parish Clerk*. We have had no national portraiture hitherto, but in the main only the portraiture of a certain section of the community. In recent years, Mr. Clausen, Mr. La Thangue and a few others have given us portraits of those who really constitute the nation, and upon whose average sterling worth of character and varied labour—labour that often makes them picturesque as the well-to-do classes are not—all well-being rests. This kind of portraiture is almost an importation from France. The early work of Mr. Clausen and Mr. La Thangue proclaims its debt to French example. Our fashionable portrait painters have done us little service of this kind. It is an old soldier, with his gorgeous uniform, that attracts Millais. He paints him splendidly—dress, military bearing even in old age, worn look, flesh thinning to the bone and well-nigh transparent skin. But why did he not go also to the mine, the forge and the factory ?

Having said so much about Millais' pictures of children, there is perhaps no need for me to do more than say generally that he painted not a few children's portraits.



## IX

### *LANDSCAPE*

MILLAIS was in the main a figure painter. It happened that in his Pre-Raphaelite days, most of the subjects that he chose required an open-air setting. The word landscape is hardly applicable to this setting in most of the pictures. There is a natural background, but it is usually restricted to a detailed presentation of individual plants and flowers, even blades of grass. There is rarely room for a whole tree near at hand, and usually we get no glimpse of the distance. The detail was laboriously painted, weeks and months were given to painstaking delineation of the plants and flowers. There was no attempt to suggest movement, what we may call the quick changes of nature's moods and expression. In a note on *The Boyhood of Raleigh* Mr. Spielmann, after observing that Millais rarely painted the sea, says that he did not care for moving things, whether sea or cloud or horse. This recalls to

me that, as I have had occasion to mention elsewhere, the late Walter Severn told me that Ruskin on one occasion, watching him painting a sky across which the clouds were passing rapidly, said that he was attempting too much, and that he himself never painted anything that moved, indeed, anything that could move, for he feared that it might move on! Ruskin was delighted when he got Millais to spend weeks over the background of the Glenfinlas portrait. There is little need for surprise, then, that when Millais, in *The Blind Girl*, had as a background to his figures a stretch of common with Winchelsea in the distance, he painted, as we have already seen, things in the distance so minutely that Ruskin found it necessary to rebuke him for painting the spark of light in a crow's eye a hundred yards away, as if he were only painting a miniature of a crow close by. Ruskin said of this picture: 'Since Van Eyck and Dürer there has nothing been so well done in laying of clear oil-colour within definite line'; and it might be added that since the time of such painters as the Van Eycks and Memling there had been no such minutely detailed rendering of nature.

Philip Gilbert Hamerton, in 'Landscape,' says, in the course of a note on Jan Van Eyck's *La Vierge au Donateur*: 'I have often rather regretted that

the kind of landscape-painting here begun was not quietly developed afterwards in the same direction instead of being completely abandoned.' One can only at intervals go to the Louvre, delight oneself in the jewel-like beauty of the original picture, and after joining in the stately scene of solemn adoration under the loggia, pass out on to the terrace-garden, with its—perhaps—symbolical lilies and peacocks, join the two picturesquely habited gentlemen on the walk by the battlemented wall, and look out over that delightful Gothic city, with its cathedral and churches, its high-pitched roofs, its walls and towers, its fortified bridge over the noble river that passes through the middle of it, watch the people, like busy little ants, thronging its streets and quays and squares, or crossing the river by the bridge, or in boats, then let the eye wander to the open country beyond, with its gardens near the city, its trees and fields farther away, and so to where, gleaming under the cloudless blue, the snow-clad mountains, whence the river winds its way, close the wonderful vista. Only occasionally can one delight oneself <sup>that</sup> in the picture itself; but all this, without the colour, can be seen in the five-inch square photogravure in Hamerton's book; and it is always with a thrill and sense of exaltation—as when one actually sees the Alps from far away—that, as now while I am writing, I

have the reproduction before me. Well might Hamerton wish that such landscape painting as this had not been abandoned. The Dutch painters often gave much varied incident in their far-stretching landscapes, but not so as to convey the feeling of intensified vision that we get from the earlier Flemish painters. Among our English water-colourists, William Turner of Oxford used to show distant buildings, ships and other objects with almost Flemish minuteness. What exclamations of wonder come from those who for the first time look down upon a city from a lofty tower, or over a vast prospect of sea and land from a mountain-summit! They have a new scale of proportion by which to measure the things that, before they had seen them from a distance, seemed so big to them! I had the good fortune once to be by the sea when there was a mirage, and league after league of ocean, dotted with what looked the tiniest of ships, came up above the horizon. Those who saw it were spell-bound as if by a vision. There might have been a miraculous extension of the field of sight.

There were such possibilities as these in the Pre-Raphaelite painting of landscape. It could have affected our emotions, not merely by showing us the detailed beauty of living and inanimate nature close at hand, but also by giving us, through a clearer percep-

tion of things far away than is given by the wandering eye, that merely takes in the prospect as a whole, a fuller conception as by a vision of the vastness and myriad beauty and interest of the world.

Doubtless there are those to whom such things make no appeal. One can only say finally that for those who like this kind of thing this is just the kind of thing they like. Redgrave, in 'A Century of Painters of the English School,' asks what would be the result of carrying out the Pre-Raphaelite principle, stated by Ruskin to be the 'one and only principle of absolute and uncompromising truth obtained by working everything, down to the minutest detail, from nature and from nature only,' and replies: 'Certainly not art, but merely topographical truth. As well might the poet, from some hill-top, catalogue the meadows and corn-fields, the hedgerows, the villages, mansions, and churches he sees before him, and call it poetry.' We know better than this to-day. Baldly stated, what Redgrave says is that there is no poetry in topographic truth. Mr. Muirhead Bone shows us that there is poetry in a prison yard, in a gloomy Glasgow Street with the prison wall along one side of it, and in the British Museum Reading Room crowded with decorators' scaffolding. About the time that Redgrave was writing, Walt Whitman was making poetic cata-

logues ; and soon Edward Carpenter was writing such prose-poetry as: 'The Castle rock of Nottingham stands up bold over the Trent valley, the tall flagstaff waves its flag, the old market-place is full of town and country folk. The river goes on broadening seaward. I see where it runs beneath the great iron swing-bridges of railroads, there are canals connecting with it, and the sails of canal-boats gliding on a level with the meadows.'

It was no part of the Pre-Raphaelite creed, of course, that the mere fact was to be recorded exactly as it appeared : that there was to be no design. To demand this on account of any written statement of the creed is to press for the letter that kills. Nor must we necessarily accept all that Ruskin said about Hunt and Millais, as, for example, the following dictum quoted by Redgrave : 'As landscape painters, the principal of that division of them who do not trust to imagination, must in great part confine themselves to mere foreground-work ; they have been born with comparatively little enjoyment of those evanescent effects and distant sublimities which nothing but the memory can arrest, and nothing but a daring conventionalism portray.' On this Redgrave might well remark : 'Rather damaging admissions if true !' It is not safe to infer that an artist who, being primarily a

figure painter, uses landscape mainly as a background for figures, is incapable of enjoying the kind of landscape that does not serve his immediate purpose. Holman Hunt, in a water-colour drawing, *The Terrace, Berne*, showed, at a later date, that he could appreciate evanescent effects. The moon, above the hills, throws iridescent light through the barred, cirrus clouds, while, low down, quite near to the ground in the valley, drifting wraiths of cloud catch here and there, where the moon shines clear, a brightness greater than that of their fellows. And if Millais never tried to render evanescent effects, his later landscapes showed him to be not insensible to the charm of distance; while, in as early a picture as *Autumn Leaves*, the subtly recorded differences in the blue tones of the hills, and the depth of space in the twilight sky, away into which the retiring line of poplars is like a guide, reveal a profound sensibility to distant sublimity. It is interesting to note, in this connexion, that Millais could not join in Ruskin's enthusiastic admiration of Turner's work. Perhaps this may have had something to do with Ruskin's framing a dictum that, at the very least, greatly overstates the case.

It is idle to speculate as to what Millais might have done if he had continued to interpret nature as he did in *Autumn Leaves* and *The Blind Girl*. He was quite

a young man, only twenty-seven years old, when these two great pictures were painted. We can but share Ruskin's regret : ' What he might have painted for us, if *we* had only known what we would have of him ! Heaven only knows. But we none of us knew—nor he either.' We know what we have from Van Eyck, and Millais was capable of giving us, not identically the same thing, of course, but a modern variant of it that would have had far more value than the landscapes he did paint. No modern painter has approached the particular quality of the landscape in *The Blind Girl*. In his later landscapes Millais merely did, better than less accomplished craftsmen than he could do, the kind of thing that, nevertheless, has been done by many.

All the way through, his treatment of landscape may be described as matter-of-fact. But the fact was so lovingly stated in his earlier pictures as to make them no mere prose-record but essential poetry. His later work was equally matter-of-fact, with, we may say, much of the fact left out, or merely suggested, not lovingly stated ; and with it went much of the poetry ; for there came no stateliness or intricacy of design, no subtle rendering of light and atmosphere, to make up for the lack of manifest delight in the individual charm of beautiful living things.

Millais is said to have averred his 'preference' for



landscape painting to portraiture. Probably the latter came to have some feeling of task-work in town ; whereas the former went along with shooting and fishing in the Highlands. Nearly all his later landscapes are scenes in Scotland, scenes with pleasant associations, and painted with a near approach to topographical accuracy. Mr. Spielmann records of certain of these landscapes that one shows where Millais used to shoot grouse ; another, where he went snipe-shooting ; another, his fishing on the Tay. The biography contains an enthusiastic account of the shooting and fishing at Murthly, the house that Millais rented for ten years, and which, and its surroundings, appear in so many of his landscapes.

He used to paint his landscapes on the spot. Of *Chill October*, the first important, purely landscape picture he painted, he recorded, in a note pasted on the canvas-stretcher, that he made no sketch for it, but painted every touch from nature, on the canvas itself, under irritating trials of wind and rain, the only studio-work being in connexion with the effect. Other landscapes were painted from a movable hut, an open-air studio.

The first, *Chill October*, is also one of the most poetic of Millais' landscapes. It expresses a mood that the scene itself, a backwater on the River Tay,



CHILL OCTOPER



awakened in the artist, who had frequently passed in the train. The foreground is a sedgy swamp, comes the backwater, a reach of the river is seen and a line of wind-swept willows on a narrow strip of land between the backwater and the main stream, and a low hill closes the distance. Overhead a grey sky, a wan light getting through where the clouds are thinnest; a flight of birds, the only visible stirrers in a world that might be far away from any human haunt, adds to, rather than mitigates, the sense of loneliness. One finds oneself wondering what the spirit of the scene would be like could it rise in human form from the river, for that a spirit does inhabit it ~~we~~ cannot but *feel*, whatever we may *think*. No human form will appear, however; we are alone with the wind-swayed sedges and trees, the gleaming water, the distant hill, and the birds that float and wheel and dart to windward between grey cloud and the only grey world below. To a pantheist this would be a sacred picture. Our growing knowledge of Chinese art, and of the Chinese interpretation of nature, makes it easy for us to understand why Chinese visitors to England, seeing this picture in Lord Armstrong's collection, should be profoundly moved by it.

A story is told in the biography of a railway-porter who used 'to carry' Millais' canvas to and from the

stationmaster's hut, where he kept it, to the wooden platform upon which he had to work, close to the railway-line, and who was astonished to hear that Millais had received a thousand pounds for the picture for which he himself 'wudna hae gien half-a-croon. There is another story I have heard or read of the same picture, but from whom or where I cannot recollect—and therefore tell with all reserve—which, if it be authentic, suggests that Millais, though painting upon the spot, was no slave to literal fact. A man leaning on a rail behind the painter, and watching him at work, said, 'Mon, did ye never try photography?' 'No, never,' replied Millais. 'But it's a hantle quicker,' came the rejoinder. 'Yes, so I believe,' said the painter meekly. Then came the crushing and within its narrow limits, irrefutable criticism, 'Aye, and it's mair like the place!'

Such expression of a mood is not common in Millais' landscapes, otherwise what is said of them in preceding pages would have to be withdrawn. *Flowing to the Sea* and *Flowing to the River*, two Tennyson side landscapes, painted, the one in the same year as *Chill October*, and the other in the following year, are records of scenes the sight of which has given pleasure rather than stirred deep emotions. To the same time belongs *Winter Fuel*, of which the title holds more

promise of poetry than the picture itself fulfils. A silver-birch has been cut down. Its heavier branches have been laid on the timber-cart, the big wheels of which, and its stark serviceable framework, are prominent objects in the picture, while the lighter branches and twigs encumber the ground about it. A holly-tree, perhaps thirty yards away, does not quite succeed in giving the true sense of distance between us and the trees from behind which smoke rises from the cottages, while beyond again is a bold, rocky, sparsely tree-clad hill-side. Over all is a grey autumnal sky. One finds it difficult to account for the choice of this subject. It seems as if Millais must have seen or felt something in it that he has failed to communicate. The hill-side, massive against the sky, is impressive, so also, as hinted above, is the timber-cart. There is pathos in the ruin of the silver-birch, upon the beauty of the bark of which the painter has lovingly dwelt, though painting it, not in the old Pre-Raphaelite manner, but so that it 'comes right' at a calculated distance from the picture. The picture sets before us an interesting, though not particularly interesting, scene, but not so as to make any strong emotional appeal, either through the sentiment suggested by the title, or through any effect of light, colour or atmosphere in the landscape, although the effect of

the light coming cold and grey through the cloud is admirably given. On the whole it is the poor birch-tree that says the last word to us. But this hardly accounts for a six-foot canvas.

It is interesting to contrast this picture, in one or two points of detail, with *Autumn Leaves*, which hangs near it in the Manchester City Art Gallery. One of the gardener's children in the latter picture holds an apple in her hand. It looks real enough to make the mouth water. It could be pared, quartered and eaten, or the teeth could go crunching through skin and flesh to the pips of the core. A little girl sits on the timber-cart in *Winter Fuel*. She also holds an apple in her hand—at least, something shaped like an apple and distantly resembling one in colour. Only the teeth of the blind would go into this. Those who can see may choose whether it be wax or soap. The dress of the children in *Autumn Leaves* is carefully painted, in colour and texture. This child's frock is so carelessly painted as to be clearly, particularly the braid on its skirt, mere streaks of paint, even when seen from the distance to which we must step back in order to see the picture as a whole. Millais' boast that whatever else he was he was never careless is not fulfilled here, nor is it, one thinks, in the sky.

The *Fringe of the Moor, Over the Hills and Far away*, and the much later *Murthly Moss* and *Murthly ter* are all transcripts, only differing in degree as to truth and force, of scenes which would have a bracing, tonic effect upon anyone long cooped up in the city. *Murthly Moss* was specially endeared to the painter, J. Spielmann says, for its reputation as a snipe- and duck-shooting ground. In what way and to what extent such pleasures would inspire an artist sympathetically to interpret the scene, one who is not a sportsman cannot say. Certainly the foreground suggests to such one places whence birds might be expected to rise, and vast distance into which, after being missed, they might escape. This is guess-work. What is assured is, the present writer is a feeling of having escaped from all limitation and convention, of having left behind footpaths, notice-boards and sign-posts, of being fully able to lose oneself if desirous of doing so, of a desire to get over the moss and see what lies in the distance. Now one thinks there must be between the middle distance and the far-away hill, and that whatever one stands and wherever one goes there will be pure air and exhilarating brightness. The utter want of formality in the composition of the picture strengthens its particular appeal. Mr. Bernhard Berenson's summing-up of the pleasure the landscape painter has to give us



## MILLAIS

‘the consciousness of an unusually intense degree of well-being,’ may leave something further to be said ; but certainly this is one thing, and an important thing, that the landscape painter can give us, and that we get from Millais in such pictures as this.

Pathos is the note of *The Deserted Garden*, suggested by Campbell’s lines :—

Yet wandering, I found on my ruinous walk,  
By the dial-stone aged and green,  
One rose of the wilderness left on its stalk,  
To mark where the garden had been.

The crude, summary sketchiness of this picture goes a long way, if not all the way, to justify Ruskin’s vehement condemnation of it, which would just as well have supported an action for libel as what he said about Whistler’s art. He was so angry, that he turned on Campbell as well as on Millais. When exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1875, the picture had no title, simply the lines quoted above against its number and the painter’s name. Ruskin, in his notes on the Academy, said : ‘ I venture to supply a title, the painter seeming to have been at a loss. “ A wild Rose, remarkable in being left on its stalk, demonstrates to the poet Campbell that there has been a garden in this locality ” ’ ! The picture itself made him look back regretfully to Wilkie and Mulready, to Stanfield and Roberts and

their contemporaries. They had at least done true things, according to their strength, with loving minds. But 'here you have, what was once the bone and sinew of a great painter, ground and carded down into black-podded broom-twigs.' The landscape was only *disant*, its details were 'the four-petalled rose, the sprinkle of hips looking like ill-drawn heather, the sundial looking like an ill-drawn fountain, the dirty birth tree, and the rest—whatever it is meant for—of the inarticulate brown scrabble.' The biography tells us that Millais always thought *The Deserted Garden* one of his best works, and advised its painter never to mind what other people might say about it. Is this an illustration of Val Prinsep's dictum that the critics know nothing at all about art; or does it show yet once again that a painter is not the best critic of his own work? The latter more than the former, let us say, guardedly.

Not only against both Campbell and Millais, but against 'the diabolic Tom Tiddler's ground of Manchester and Salford,' did this picture, by a somewhat obscure process, excite Ruskin's ire. The painter is said to make manifest, 'with what ragged remnant of painter's life is in him, the results of mechanical labour on English land.' In the deserted garden he sees 'the wiffling' pleasure of a fallen race, who

have sold their hearths for money, and their glory for a morsel of bread.' It is only too true that, for many years past, we have been making our once beautiful island-home ugly and ever uglier; but there were deserted gardens before this evil began; and years later Millais was to paint, not a deserted garden, but an old garden—the picture's title—well-kept, with trim yew hedges, square-cut as walls, and the picture more carefully painted, so that Ruskin might have been able to praise it. The afterglow from the western sky brightens the gable-end and roof and chimneys of a Scottish — baronial—house; a ridge of distant hill shows through the trees, the edges of things in the garden are caught by the light reflected from the clear sky. We can almost hear the sounds, plash of water in the fountain-basin, late song of bird, bleat of sheep far away, that make the silence audible. The picture is an evening hymn. We are taken back, over thirty years, from 1889 to the fifties, to *Autumn Leaves*, *Sir Isumbras* and *The Vale of Rest*.

*Halcyon Weather* is another landscape, painted as late as 1892, that has the note of pathos. Once more it is the fall of the year, November's 'little summer of St. Martin.' Many leaves have fallen, the changed colour of others shows how near they are to their fall. The air is still, so still that with almost perfect reflec-

## LANDSCAPE

tion the trees are mirrored in the lake—a phrase that Millais thought of at first as a title for the picture—in which the kingfisher sits motionless on a slender branch.

Millais used to be in Scotland in winter as well as in autumn, and there are four pictures by him painted at this season, and showing nature in her winter clothing. The first of these was *The Misty Gatherer*, painted in 1884; and then he waited for a time, before painting another snow-scene, because he feared that the white pigment that must be used for such subjects would not be permanent. Assured on this technical point, he produced, four years later, *Christmas Eve*, which shows Murthly Castle, its windows lighted by the setting sun, and the ground covered by snow that has been lying for some time, as is clear from its texture, and the marks upon it, both faithfully given by the painter. Three years later again he painted *Glen Birnam*, a so matter-of-fact, portrait-like treatment of the subject, that people familiar with the place will tell you exactly where in the glen is the spot chosen by Millais for his picture. We are looking along the road that follows the winding of the glen, and is flanked by trees on both sides; above the trees we get a glimpse of the hill-side, and above all are the warm hues of the evening sky. An old woman in a plaid shawl, carrying a basket, is

trudging along the road. There has been a slight fall of snow which has done little more than dust the ground. The scene is a beautiful one, and a spell of one of nature's quiet, peaceful moods. There is a tender light in the sky, there is the beginning of the dark in the woods. Were we walking along this road, we think, we should be awake to the woodland beauty around us. The painter has given care to nothing but the general effect. The bark of the birch-trees is merely indicated by dabs of black paint among the grey. The network of branches is got, quite well enough for the general effect, by long strokes of paint wriggling almost at haphazard. The withered bracken is mere dabs of brown. We have left a long way behind the time when, as we have found the painter's brother saying, none of nature's beautiful detail was slurred over. And one feels sure that more of this loving care here would have, not detracted from, but intensified the general effect. There is a thinness, a failure to suggest nature's strength and depth, that weakens the picture's emotional appeal.

Of a very different character from the snow-pictures already mentioned is the last of the series, *B'ore, B'ore, thou Winter Wind*, where we are in the midst of a snow-storm, on an open, moorland road. \* Though the

trunks of the Scots pines may refuse to yield to the gale, their branches are swayed and tossed by it, while small tree-branches that have been broken off are sent capering across the ground. The rough stone wall of an enclosure that offers no shelter adds to, rather than takes away from, the bleak inhospitality of the place, the loneliness of which is emphasised by the blocking out of the distance by the driving snow. The scene is faithfully rendered, for Millais, as usual, painted upon the spot, only leaving the finishing of the picture to be done in the studio. The landscape has the look of a happy, natural composition, of something that 'comes well,' rather than of a studied arrangement. And this naturalness lends force to the human tragedy that is being enacted amid such dreary surroundings : the man leaving to her fate the woman who has sat down, wearied beyond all further contending with the storm, and who leans over as if to protect from its fury the child beneath her shawl. The dog, more humane than his master, stops and turns towards her, throwing up his head and howling piteously.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,  
Thou art not so unkind  
As man's ingratitude

This is the full title of the picture.

Millais' landscape painting cannot be called great though it had great moments. It expressed a sincere but by no means a subtle or profound affection for nature. While it failed to fulfil the promise of the landscape in the earlier subject-pictures, it did not show the way to a different but equally valid interpretation of nature. What influence it had on other and less brilliant craftsmen was far from being a good one, and helps to account for much of the painstaking but uninspired and uninspiring landscape that only now is beginning to be less in evidence on exhibition walls. The fresher impulses in the landscape painting of to-day have come, either directly from the great English landscape painters who preceded Millais, or indirectly from these same painters by way of France, with considerable gains made on the way. Yet we can turn to his landscapes with pleasure, and it may well be that when landscape art tends to be too subjective, or overmuch an affair of formal, classical design, Millais' plain statements of a truth that a little beauty will be useful factors in a readjustment of the balance.

## X

### *OF MANY THINGS, AND CONCLUSION*

BUT little is said in the preceding chapters in the way of biographical detail. We have seen that Millais became prosperous. He built for himself a house in Palace Gate, which, we may say, for the information of others than Londoners, is close to Kensington Gardens. Late in life he used to contrast the position he had attained, with what he was when he and his brother went fishing in the Round Pond and elsewhere. Holman Hunt tells of his saying in Bishop's Park, Fulham, 'Bless my soul alive, do you mean to tell me that's the place where I, when I was a child, used to come fishing for sticklebacks? Only think, and now here am I a baronet and all that sort of thing, with a fishing of my own' of several miles, and land to shoot over!' This was said aloud, and, says his friend, the public stared at him almost as though he were as important as the bishop him-



self. One incident like this is enough to illustrate the childlike simplicity that endeared him to all who knew him.

What is said in the biography about the home-life is very pleasant reading. 'At home and at leisure,' says his son, 'he was always the life and soul of the household.' It was partly through his marriage with a Perthshire lady, Miss Euphemia Chalmers Gray, after the annulment of her marriage with Ruskin, that he came to divide his time between London and Scotland. We have seen her persuading Trelawny to join the old explorer in *The North-West Passage*. When he was in difficulties with *The Vale of Rest*, unable to get to his liking the figure of the nun digging the grave, she saw that he was nearly distracted about it, and locked the picture up for several days. When it was given back to him he at once saw the way out of the difficulty. This was a brave bearding of the lion in his den for his own good.

It may almost be said that everyone knows the little curly-headed boy whom the Duke of Sussex could not see over the table-top to have grown into a tall, handsome man. Probably he was most comfortable when clad in a shooting-jacket and wearing a off cap. I recollect seeing him once in this costume, with a short pipe in his mouth, looking at the contents

of a print-shop window in a provincial city whither he had gone to see his pictures in an exhibition.

He was boyish to the end. Only once, when disease had reduced the once strong voice almost to a whisper, had I the pleasure—inevitably a somewhat melancholy one under such conditions—of meeting him; and I can almost feel yet the hearty flat-hander between the shoulder-blades with which he emphasised a jocular remark. Not long afterwards, on the 13th of August, 1896, the disease, painful but happily brief, had stricken him down.

His language was that of a boy. The days of the Pre-Raphaelite battle were those in which he was 'so dreadfully bullied.' His eloquence was that of clear statement in homely language. Here is a sample from his correspondence: 'The fact is, the Royal Academy is the only place for a man to find his real level. All the defects come out so clearly that no private puffing is worth a farthing. You cannot thrust pictures down people's throats.' What could be more delightful than what he said to Sir George Reid about interviewers: 'These fellows want to know everything; they want to know what you had for dinner, and if you say "chops," then they want to know what you did with the bones!' What a boyish naïveté there was in the way in which he expressed

his gratitude to the Royal Academy when he presided at the banquet in 1895 in the place of Lord Leighton, kept away by his last illness. 'I must tell you briefly,' he said, 'my connexion with this Academy. I entered the Antique School as a probationer, when I was eleven years of age; then became a student in the Life School; and I have risen from stage to stage until I reached the position I now hold of Royal Academician: so that, man and boy, I have been intimately connected with this Academy for more than half a century. I have received here a free education as an artist—an advantage any lad may enjoy who can pass a qualifying examination—and I owe the Academy a debt of gratitude I can never repay. I can, however, make this return—I can give it my love. I love everything belonging to it, the casts I have drawn from as a boy, the books I have consulted in our Library, the very benches I have sat on.' How did I detect this from the formal eloquence of Leighton—a difference that throws light upon the difference in their art; just as Millais' astonishing Watts by summarily ending a conversation about art with an objection to 'talking shop' outside the studio, throws light upon the difference in their art, and their respective attitudes towards art. To Millais art was a kind of talk about all sorts of things, that

interested or moved him; to Watts it was a matter of religion.

Millais' opinions about the art he practised were expressed in a delightfully breezy manner. In an article entitled 'Thoughts on our Art of to-day,' which he contributed to 'The Magazine of Art,' he defends modern painting with a quite Hogarthian vigour; and backs British art against the world at large. 'I am emphatically of opinion,' he begins, 'that the best Art of modern times is as good as any of its kind that has gone before, and furthermore, that the best Art of England can hold its own against the world.' This is not the place to discuss the grounds for such cheery optimism. It shows, however, that Millais must have been able to practise his art with full confidence that he and his fellow-painters were doing something of enduring value. 'A hundred years hence,' he says, 'when time has done its work, that school [the English] will receive the approval of posterity!'

By that time what he declares to be two of the greatest of the Old Masters, Time and Varnish, will have done their work. He says we may rest assured that the rich brown grass of Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* was originally green, painted as Titian saw it, and that it has faded with time to its present beautiful colour. Some people nowadays will not have green in pictures.

But God Almighty has given us green, and you may depend upon it it's a fine colour.' This is magnificent; but is it good sense? What we want to know is, if the grass in Titian's picture was originally green, did the green harmonise with the other colours in the picture? We have it on the authority of an old lady, even if a mythical one, that Mesopotamia is a blessed world, but it does not rhyme with lion-tamer. Doubtless, F is a fine note; but it will not come into a chord with its neighbour F sharp. If God has given the colour green, it is the colour-men and the painters that make pigments, and there are many possible shades of green, capable of producing either harmony or discord alongside other colours. So M. de la Sizeranne says that we may be sure, from the colours in this picture that have lasted, that if Titian, as is not improbable, did make the grass green, the green was true in relation to the other tints in the picture. 'On the contrary if, perchance, the verdure in *The Protestant Royalist* should turn brown two or three hundred years hence, plenty of false touches will remain on Sir John Millais' canvas to give rise to a supposition that his green was harsh, as it really is.' And whether the French critic's opinion of the colour in this particular picture be just or not, he clearly shows that Millais' argument proves nothing about the

respective merits of old and modern masters. Breeziness and confidence are not everything.

In the same article, as already quoted, he blames certain young English painters who persist in painting with a broken French accent. The article was written in 1888, just two years after the New English Art Club was formed as a rallying-ground for painters who had been trained in Paris, and who felt that the Royal Academy was narrowly refusing a just recognition of their work. Millais said that they were 'constitutionally, absolutely, and in the nature of things, unable to copy with justice either to themselves or their models' the French masters. Could he see the Royal Academy to-day, he would find these young painters and their successors installed there, and held by many to be the very men to whom it is due that the academic cult has not wholly lost its flavour. His apology for the broken French accent does not hold good. Even if it did, is not the English language a product of old German, French, Latin, Greek, and what else? But art, more easily than language, passes over national boundaries. What would our architecture, sculpture, painting and music be without all that has crossed the sea to come to us? And we in turn have done things by which other nations have profited. No nation nor nations can live unto themselves.

Indeed Millais refutes himself in the same paragraph. After condemning the lifeless English imitations of Greek sculpture he says: 'But the influence of Carpeaux, who was one of the leaders of the great French school of Sculpture and placed it above the rest of the modern world—strongly supported in the present day by M. Dalou—has at length reached us; and this department of art now augurs every whit as well for the future as that of painting.'

Sir Walter Armstrong, in his essay on Millais in the 'Art Annual' for 1887, quotes an opinion of the painter which, incidentally, is a condemnation of most of Holman Hunt's work in the East, and of not a few of his own pictures. Happily, as Sir Walter hints, Millais' opinion is not a sound one. In the course of a talk about art he said that the difficulty of giving an agreeable reality to sacred subjects daunted modern artists living in a critical age and sensitive to criticism. He would have liked himself, he said, to paint a large devotional picture, having for subject 'Suffer little children to come unto Me,' but the only children we care about are our own English ones, not 'the brown, bead-eyed, simious-looking children of Syria.' He could not see any fitness either in painting a Saviour and children of Eastern type under an Eastern sun, or in translating the scene to England. Sir Walter men-

tions that at the very time Millais was thus stating a dilemma, Fritz von Uhde was painting his well-known picture of the Saviour surrounded by modern German children in a modern German cottage, and says that the picture had deeply impressed him.

On the whole one cannot find much that is of value in Millais' theorising about his art. He is safe when he says, as Sir Walter Armstrong reports, that a painter must be able to paint; to set down what he wants to set down, and that beyond this it is difficult to say where comes in the mental distillation that makes a work of art great; but it hardly needs a Millais to say this.

In one particular, at least, Millais might certainly have learned something from the French painters. A poor quality of brush-work, indifference to clean handling of the paint so long as he obtained the effect he desired, has been both charged against him abroad and admitted at home. This, of course, does not mean carelessness as to the effect, though even here he cannot be given an absolutely clean bill, his assertion in the article already quoted that whatever else he was he was never careless, notwithstanding. The carelessness may have been the exception that proves the rule, but in several of his pictures, particularly in the skies, but also in detail of dress, foliage, etc., there is a haste



that is little if any better than slapdash, there are things that do not look like what they purport to be when seen at any reasonable distance from the picture.

Millais went abroad at various times, to Paris, to Italy, to Holland, and apparently to Germany; but he does not seem to have closely studied contemporary foreign art with a view to anything he might be able to learn from it for his own practice. It is interesting to read of his being at the Mauritshuis at the Hague with W. P. Frith, and of his trying to get Frith to admire Rembrandt or Frans Hals, while Frith tried to bring the erstwhile Pre-Raphaelite to the knees before Metsu or Gerard Dow. It is somewhat perplexing to find him disappointed at Amsterdam with *The Night Watch* but enthusiastic over Van der Helst's *Banquet of the Arquebusiers*.

Millais' full command of his craft and its materials, his power to represent what he wished to represent, and to give to his well-drawn figures any required gesture or movement, and within wide limits, expression of emotion, have already been made clear. We have seen that his method of using colour, the colour-effect at which he aimed, underwent a great change, a change in one man's career comparable, in a general sense, to that between the colour of Italian painting in the fifteenth and in the sixteenth century, or between

the colour of the early Flemish painters and that of Rubens. Some harshness of colour in his Pre-Raphaelite days has already been incidentally noticed. He and Holman Hunt, followed in this respect by Madox Brown and others, secured the lasting brilliancy of their pictures by painting on a freshly laid white ground. Millais' later work was distinctly that of a colourist, of one who designed in colour, not in line or mass with colour added. He gradually freed himself from dependence on anything but the slightest of preliminary sketches. Was he a great colourist? We can say at least that he used colour splendidly, often with great and successful daring. Into the details of his studio-practice we need not enter. Many interesting particulars are given in the biography. To one limitation of his art reference should be made. There was nothing in his earliest manner incompatible with his executing works of decorative art. In 1847 he painted a set of six panels for lunettes in the Judges' lodgings at Leeds. But the minute—if not microscopic—painting of detail that Holman Hunt and he adopted was entirely unsuited for painting on a large scale; and whether or not in later years he desired to do such work, we have nothing from him like the mural painting of Watts, Madox Brown, Leighton and Burne-Jones; while

their work in this kind was limited rather by the scanty opportunities for it afforded in this country than by any lack on their part of willingness and ability to undertake it.

The inevitable tendency of the extreme realism of the Pre-Raphaelitism of Hunt and Millais was to subordinate purely artistic considerations of design, colour and so forth to expression. 'Art for art's sake' was not their motto; and the student of Millais' work all through will find that again and again it is the dramatically skilful presentation of the subject that first arrests the attention, and not the purely sensuous effect of the picture.

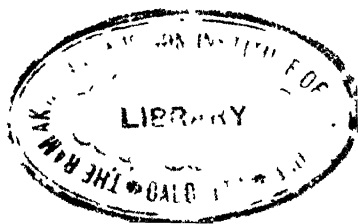
No attempt is made here to select from the multitude of Millais' works a certain number of indisputable masterpieces. The preferences to which expression has been given hint at what the selection would be.

As was said at the outset, when all shortcomings have been admitted, Millais' life-work was a notable one. The contemporary honours paid to him, at home and abroad, were such as would not be paid to one in the enduring value of some of whose work his own time had not confidence. At least he must ever hold high rank among the painters of his own day. His work was not of the greatest kind; that which lifts the high









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